

REVIEW OF REGISTERED PROVIDERS 2017/18

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report is to inform Members of the Overview and Scrutiny committee on the outcome of the 2017/18 Registered Providers (RPs) 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 Overview and Scrutiny RP Review sub-group for 2017/18 comprised:

Members	Officers
Councillor Mike Smith (Chair) Councillor Steve Masterson Councillor Rod Cooper Councillor Jennifer Evans Councillor Mike Roberts	Zoë Paine Sue Thornett Qamer Yasin attended meeting with Grainger Trust

2.2 Registered Providers: Meetings held

Registered Provider	Meeting date
Mears Group	15 th November 2017
Accent South	24 th January 2018
Stonewater Housing	7 th February 2018
Grainger Trust	12 th February 2018

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
- The Management of Estates and Homes
 - Quality of housing product
 - Financial information
 - Performance management
 - Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Customer Satisfaction and Tenant involvement
 - Risk management to include: fire, gas and electrical safety
 - Review of Leaseholder service charges
 - Assisting residents with welfare issues
 - Development opportunities

5. Summary of Review Group findings

- 5.1 **Mears Group – Housing stock in Rushmoor: 45 units of temporary accommodation at Clayton Court, two of which are wheelchair compliant.**

- Members visited Clayton Court (Aldershot) prior to the Review meeting and were impressed with the building and external communal area, accommodation and the scheme manager.
- Mears are currently looking at improvements to Clayton Court to make the entrance hall more welcoming and using the space to provide a homework club.
- They are currently looking at improved engagement with tenants and a new customer strategy has been agreed.
- Mears explained their role as a leading provider of housing management services to the public sector; In particular, the specialist housing service they provide to homelessness: emergency and temporary accommodation to local authorities.

- 5.2 **Accent South – Housing stock in Rushmoor: Total of 158 properties, which include; 54 general needs rented, 53 shared ownership, 7 leasehold, 7 intermediate rent and 10 market rent.**

- Accent own and manage over 21,000 properties, with Accent South managing over 4,500.
- Parent company Accent Group, have undergone a review resulting in a new structure and new housing teams. Accent's new Chief Executive and Chair have worked to improve Accent's financial position and resilience.

- Members visited two schemes in Aldershot and were impressed with the cleanliness and decorative order; new contractors are in place. The housing officer was helpful and the residents reflected that the tenants they had met seemed to be very happy with their home and landlord.
- Accent work closely with the police and Council on any Anti-Social Behaviour issues. CCTV at schemes has recently been upgraded; footage is now accessible from computers in the local office.
- It is clear that Accent have made good progress in the way they manage their housing operation since the last Review in 2016. This is reflected through improved presence at schemes and communication. It is clear that the relationship with residents is generally improved.
- Members raised concerns regarding complaints they had received about service charges and in particular, how a large repair cost is affecting residents. Officers were able to explain that they had a new leasehold team in place and had developed a payment plan to help leaseholders manage payments. A meeting had been set up to go through invoices with residents and address any other concerns. Accent is keen to set up a sinking fund to reduce the impact of large repair bills on residents going forward.
- Accent confirmed they are keen to pursue development opportunities in Rushmoor.

5.3 Stonewater Housing Association – Housing stock in Rushmoor: 104 properties, which include, 79 General needs rented, 24 retirement living, 1 wheelchair adapted and one leasehold property.

- Stonewater manage around 31,500 homes in England including affordable rented, shared ownership and outright sale properties as well as retirement and supported living schemes for older and vulnerable people, foyers and women's refuges.
- Members agreed that a scheme visit would not be required as the Review group are familiar with the Stonewater housing stock and had received invitations to the opening of the additional units at Wavell Court on 1st March 2018.
- Stonewater was formed in 2015 through the merger of Jephson and Raglan Housing Associations. Members were pleased to see that tenant satisfaction has improved in the past two years; due largely to the increased number of front line staff, improved neighbourhood offices and a multi-agency approach to Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Stonewater were asked to investigate outstanding repairs at a scheme in Aldershot; Repairs are now being carried out.
- The organisation showed a clear understanding of the impact of the welfare reform, and fuel poverty on their residents. They have recruited a social inclusion team to support vulnerable tenants.
- Stonewater has capacity to develop outside the HCA framework, and would welcome any future development in Rushmoor.

5.4 Grainger Trust – Housing stock in Rushmoor Maida phase 1: 215 properties, which include, 80 affordable rent and 32 shared ownership.

- Grainger plc was established in 1912 owning and managing private rent stock. Grainger Trust (RP for profit) being a new small but rapidly expanding RP, have a small amount of social housing, they current own and manage schemes in Rushmoor, Winchester and more recently Basingstoke and Kent.
- Members visited Wellesley, Maida phase 1 and were impressed with the quality and design of the development, especially the non-distinction between different tenures. The residents they met were delighted with their new homes.
- Maida is still in its snagging period and the Review group considered a report received from a ward councillor regarding some repair issues repairs, which are being resolved.
- Grainger Trust is carrying out their first tenant satisfaction survey in 2018 and Members were invited to review the results.
- Grainger are committed to diversity and employing local labour on site. They are working with the Council to provide training and apprenticeship opportunities to local residents and offer a career pathway for staff entering through the apprenticeship route.
- Grainger Trust adopts a thorough approach to pre-tenancy checks to ensure tenancies are sustainable. They also offer early intervention and support to tenants that are experiencing difficulties in maintaining their tenancy.
- Management standards are consistently applied across all tenures at the scheme and a high standard of safety checks are regularly carried out.

6 2018/19

The Committee has already agreed to establish the Registered Providers Review Group for 2018/19. A programme of meetings is being arranged, starting in September, and the terms of reference of the Review Group are currently being revised. One major change under the new arrangements will be for VIVID to be subject to a similar process of scrutiny as to the other registered providers. This will allow the Review Group to make comparisons and build an overall picture over time.

7 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.

8 Recommendation

That Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report and agree the outline arrangements for 2018/19.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

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

CONTACT DETAILS:

Councillor Mike Smith

Chair of the Registered Providers Review Group

Report Author – Sue Thornett: Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer

Tel: 01252 398632 / sue.thornett@rushmoor.gov.uk

Head of Service – Qamer Yasin Head of Environmental Health & Housing

Tel: 01252 398640 / Qamer.yasin@rushmoor.gov.uk