

REVIEW OF REGISTERED PROVIDERS 2018/19

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report is to inform Members of the Overview and Scrutiny committee on the outcome of the 2018/19 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 2018/19 comprised:

Members	Officers
Councillor Diane Bedford Councillor Mike Smith Councillor Charles Choudhary Councillor Rod Cooper Councillor Keith Dibble Councillor Terry Bridgeman	Zoë Paine Sue Thornett

2.2 Registered Providers: Meetings held

Registered Provider	Meeting date
A2Dominion	7 th November 2018
Vivid	21 st November 2018
London and Quadrant	21 st January 2019
Radian	11 th February 2019
Stoll	20 th February 2019

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

- 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 A2Dominion – Housing stock in Rushmoor: Total of 370 properties, which include; 200 for general needs rent, 157 shared ownership, and 13 Leasehold

- Members visited three schemes in Farnborough prior to the Review meeting. Members were impressed with the condition of the properties and the communal areas. The communal area to the blocks of flats had recently been re-decorated. They were aware of damaged areas needing repair and are dealing with the issues.
- Members raised concerns regarding complaints they had received regarding repairs, in particular response to repairs at a scheme of flats in Farnborough. The Officers gave examples of cases where they had experienced challenges in reporting issues. Following a discussion around this, Members were satisfied that complaints were being dealt with correctly.
- The programme for cyclical decorating is 10 years, but this has been brought forward at the Farnborough schemes. Members acknowledged that some residents bypass the organisation's complaints procedure and this can result in RPs not being aware of complaints, which could make the process longer.
- Community Investment teams prioritise neighbourhoods with the biggest issues regardless of number of stock and holds events in the area with all teams attending so that tenants can go along and speak directly to A2dominion staff to resolve any issues.

- There are some problems getting tenants involved and A2Dominion are currently reviewing ways to engage them and encouraging young people to become involved. A Community Fund is in place and residents groups are encouraged to bid for funding for projects.

5.2 Vivid – Housing stock in Rushmoor: Total of 5,523 properties, which include; general needs rented, shared ownership, Leasehold and market rent.

- Vivid are Hampshire's largest provider of social housing in Hampshire and the nineteenth largest RP in the country having recently merged with Sentinel
- Members visited a scheme in Farnborough, which had previously been a cause for concern. They experienced a warm welcome from Vivid's Officers and observed a good impression to the overall appearance, cleanliness and the decorative order of the communal and surrounding areas since their last visit; reflecting that the tenants seemed to be very happy and that there was an excellent community feeling.
- Visiting the Regeneration scheme in Aldershot, Members observed that the development was impressive, attractive with a good community feeling. The Neighbourhood Officer was informative and happy to outline Vivid's approach to dealing with community related problems.
- Vivid work closely with the police and the Council on Anti-social Behaviour issues, having recently received a letter of recognition their assistance.
- Members raised concerns regarding a number of complaints they had received about Vivid's customer service, in particular response to repairs and long waiting times to report repairs. Vivid's Officers explained that, following the merge with Sentinel at the beginning of the year, there had been problems particularly with recruitment. These staffing issues are now resolved and a new central online complaints log has been launched to complement existing telephone and neighbourhood services.
- Vivid is actively looking at ways to improve customer service now that their new staff and Customer Experience Team are in place. During this discussion, Vivid's Officers provided up to date information and impressed Members with their knowledge of the issues raised and their concern to ensure their customers receive an efficient response whatever their enquiry.
- Vivid recognise that policy for repairs needs to be flexible in some circumstances, for example sheltered accommodation and are reviewing their policy to ensure the needs of older, more vulnerable residents are met. Financial assistance is available in the form of vouchers where needed to help with re-decorating costs on re-let properties.
- Members' overall impression of Vivid is that they are working hard to keep standards up and take notice of comments the Council make to them.

- Vivid confirmed they are keen to continue to pursue development opportunities in Rushmoor. They are one of the eight new strategic partners in the Homes England Strategic Partnership.

5.3 London & Quadrant (L&Q) – Housing stock in Rushmoor: 204 properties, which include, 165 general needs rented, 20 shared ownership and 19 agency managed.

- London & Quadrant manage around 97,000 homes in England including affordable rented, shared ownership, open market rent working with over 70 specialist agencies in the supported sector. Members have received invitations to accompany Neighbourhood Officers on their scheme inspection; a site visit did not take place.
- Members were pleased to see high levels of tenant and repairs satisfaction and a response to complaints with a higher score than other Registered Providers. A tenant's satisfaction survey carried out by L&Q showed that the in house repairs service provided is particularly helpful for tenants that are more vulnerable.
- All reports are logged on a central management system and dealt with quickly within a 3-day response to resolve standard repair complaints and 1 day for emergency anti-social behaviour (ASB) and domestic abuse issues.
- Members were impressed with L&Q's void policy, A Fair Standard for All, which provides new carpets, kitchens and bathrooms in relets if needed.
- The organisation showed a clear understanding of the impact of welfare reform. They move quickly to provide support and repayment plans to help tenants avoid arrears.
- London & Quadrant is a financially strong organisation and has capacity to develop outside the Homes England framework, although they have no strategic plans to develop in Rushmoor currently.

5.4 Radian – Housing stock in Rushmoor: 172 properties, which include, 109 rented, 62 shared ownership/equity loan, and one supported scheme in Aldershot accommodating six adults with Learning Disabilities. They acquired some of the units in Rushmoor through the mortgage rescue scheme

- Radian was formed in 2006 and, own and manages 24,000 properties mostly in East Hampshire and Windsor having taken over five subsidiaries. They are the Government's appointed Help to Buy (South) agent for affordable home ownership.
- Members raised concerns regarding Radian's regulatory downgrade from for Governance from G1 to G2 level. This has led to a change in their development function, which has since recruited to new development skills sets. They expect the G1 status to be reinstated with the ambition to be in the top 20 registered providers in the country.
- Members were impressed with the high levels of tenants satisfaction in all areas

- The organisation is reviewing the use and benefits of fixed term tenancies. They no longer issue Starter Tenancies as experience shows a settled and sustained tenancy from the start is more beneficial.
- Members were impressed with Radian's approach to supporting their tenants. Radian have done a lot of work on the risks of Universal Credit and welfare reforms and also offer early intervention and support to tenants experiencing difficulties in maintaining their tenancy. Their focus on rent arrears prevention is borne out by their low levels of arrears.
- Members appreciate the difficulties RPs face to enforce gas safety checks on leaseholders, and were pleased with Radian's approach to offer discounted rates for gas safety checks and certificates, and their policy for leaseholders which includes a clause in the lease agreement to provide copies of gas safety certificates, although this is difficult to enforce.

5.5 Stoll - One scheme for veterans and their families comprising of 34 one, two and one three-bedroom apartments.

- Members visited Centenary Lodge (Aldershot), a new scheme opened in June 2018, prior to the Review meeting. Members were impressed with the building and communal areas, accommodation and the scheme manager. Centenary Lodge is an award winning development having been awarded the Inside Housing Best Affordable Housing Development award.
- Stoll are a charity and specialist, housing and support, provider for veterans and has potential to take advantage of the housing pathway for veterans, which supports vulnerable military service personnel leaving the Armed Forces to take steps to secure permanent accommodation and live independently.
- Stoll work closely with Haig and Mike Jackson House, which is regarded as the first stage of the veteran's housing pathway to being able to live independently or with low-level support. Residents at Centenary Lodge are encouraged and supported to progress to independent living when they are ready. All residents are issued with a 7 year tenancy which includes a starter tenancy however if a resident is not ready to live independently at the end of the 7 years the tenancy will be extended.
- They are an exemplary provider with a high level of tenant satisfaction just below 100%

7 Conclusion

The RP Review process continues to play an important role in developing good working relationships with housing providers operating in the borough. The estate inspections and follow up meetings 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. A briefing will be provided to the Portfolio Holder on the programme and outcomes from 2018/19.

Following consultation with the Chairman of the Review Group, it is proposed that a further programme of review is carried out in 2019/20, at its next meeting the Review Group will be asked to agree the process and select the registered providers for review.

8 Recommendation

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

1. Endorse the programme of work in 2018/19 and request the Chairman of the Registered Providers Review Group to brief the Portfolio Holder on the issues raised.
2. Authorise the Review Group to prepare a programme of reviews for 2019/20

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

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

CONTACT DETAILS:

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