



**SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

## Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 July 2021

**Report of:** Councillor Robert Reid

Cabinet Member for Housing and  
Property



## Compliance update

Covering the actions and impacts of the regulatory findings in respect of publication of non-compliance notice by the Social Housing Regulator.

### Report Author

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Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
<b>Housing</b>	<b>Non-Key</b>	<b>All Wards</b>

<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Andrew Cotton, Director of Housing and Property	21 June 2021
<b>Approved by:</b>	Karen Bradford, Chief Executive	22 June 2021
<b>Signed off by:</b>	Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property	26 June 2021

### Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

1. That the Committee notes the latest compliance position following the meeting which took place on the 28 May 2021 with the Regulator of Social Housing.
2. That the Committee receives a further update report at its next scheduled meeting.

# 1 The Background to the Report

- 1.1 As Members will be aware the Chief Executive determined in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to self-refer the Council to the Regulator of Social Housing. Since this referral Officers have been providing further data and details relating to the core issues of non-compliance for the Regulator to consider and review.
- 1.2 Four meetings have now taken place with the Regulator with a further meeting scheduled for Friday 25th June to discuss points of clarification and to cover issues of focus and interest. Any issues of importance will be verbally reported to this meeting. These discussions and the latest request for information have been provided as required, and this has allowed the Regulator to continue to work with Officers in a constructive and helpful way.
- 1.3 This committee has now received two update reports since March 2021 which confirmed the Regulatory Notice that had been served on the Council, and an outline of the work that officers would continue to complete to ensure we logically and methodically progressed through a programme of improvement.
- 1.4 The Committee determined that it would wish to receive update reports on progress at each of its meeting to ensure that Members had oversight of broad progress around the key areas of activity and could engage with officers and scrutinise work where required. It identified the following core headings as a means of updating Members and would identify the following information to assist this process.
- 1.5 **Updating Tenants and Members:** Just prior to the publication of the Notice a further 'All Member' briefing session was undertaken, this presentation including a detailed update on ongoing progress around compliance, updating of the Improvement Plan, and indications of service improvements such as IT project implementation and contract works to progress the journey to full compliance. A further all member briefing is currently being considered, and once details are finalised, and the agenda of items agreed all Members will be invited to attend and participate.
- 1.6 Tenants have received a further update letter on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 relating to the Notice, and confirming further progress achieved around service improvement areas since the original letter that was sent in November of 2020. Officers are currently developing a new tenant's consultation and participation strategy, and it is intended that a detailed report and recommendations will be presented to this Committee as an early priority.
- 1.7 Officers have recently concluded appraising a new IT solution platform to provide 'tenant feedback' in real time and this solution is now subject to final contract signatures, building of the platform, and anticipated to become live by the end of July 2021. This initiative along with the new consultation and participation strategy will form a critical contribution to meeting the new Housing Act requirements and will demonstrate to the Regulator a clear intent by the Council to embrace full tenant participation. The Regulator has also been updated regarding the work being undertaken to build the new compliance software known as Propeller, which is now operational within Housing Technical Services, and the Regulator has confirmed satisfaction with the project progress and planned objectives officers have outlined.
- 1.8 **Audit Review Process:** As the Committee will be aware the original Audit report completed and submitted to this Committee and then subsequently submitted to Governance and Audit Committee which was held on the 18 March 2021. The Audit

Workplan for 2021 includes a further detailed audit for housing services during the summer of 2021. The objective of this work is to intensively review the necessary compliance and service improvements required to provide assurance to Members around process and regulatory compliance. This committee be engaged in reviewing and scrutinising this report and further recommendations as they come forward.

- 1.9 **Regular Meeting with the Regulator:** Monthly meetings between the Chief Executive, Director of Housing and Property Services, and the Regulator's Officers take place as scheduled; the last meeting was completed on the 28 May 21 a further meeting took place on 29 June 2021. The last meeting covered specific core areas of compliance progress and attached as Appendix A, to this report, is the core compliance summary sheet covering the areas for this committee to review and note. The Regulator also sought clarification as to progress around Fire Risk Assessments progress, and of course the planned asbestos survey and removal works for the Earlesfield Estate. Officers have agreed to provide weekly update reports relating to core activities around the Earlesfield initiative and has also recently met with the HSE to discuss both context and planned approach to such works. Both the Regulator and the HSE remain satisfied as to the progress and proposals made.
- 1.10 **Weekly Leadership Compliancy Meetings:** Chaired by Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning and attended by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, these meetings have been a continued feature of the more detailed compliance review process being undertaken. These have continued to take place weekly. Members of this group ensure specific responses to the changing compliance review process and manage tenant and the communication responses to actions associated with key service and regulatory responses such as agreeing the scope and nature of key issues to be covered by the Skyline magazine publication.
- 1.11 **Regular Reports to Committees and Cabinet:** The necessary reporting to appropriate committees will continue. This report is the second update about the core compliance activities and a further detailed update will follow to the next cycle of committee meetings. Members are invited to comment on this report content and confirm their views and observations relating to the detail contained within this report.

## **2 Consultation and Feedback Process, Including Overview and Scrutiny**

- 2.1 The necessary consultation with the tenants and Members of the Council has been undertaken through timely reporting, dispatch of letters to advise tenants of progress, and the latest Skyline publication, dedicated customer telephone enquiry line, and an updated web site detailing compliance issues and signposting services. This process will continue as required and the engagement with tenants particularly will be amended to reflect changing needs and requirements. A major contribution to this process is the new Rant and Rave IT platform identified above, which will begin to provide real time feedback from tenants by the end of July 21.

## **3 Available Options Considered**

- 3.1 These will be further determined through work with the Regulator, the adjusted Improvement Plan, and consideration of key outputs by Members, weekly Leadership Compliance meetings and All Member briefing sessions as arranged.

## **4 Preferred Option**

- 4.1 To proceed in conjunction with the support and guidance of the Regulator, and to ensure audit and regulatory requirements are fully met by way of timely actions, reporting, and agreed improvement plan activity and regular reports to this committee, Audit and Governance Committee and Cabinet as required. Additional contact and reporting has been introduced for the Regulator and if necessary the HSE relating to the Earlesfield project, and again this will continue as necessary.

## **5 Reasons for the Recommendation (s)**

- 5.1 To secure as determined by the Regulator a return to full compliance in respect of housing services, including the identification of appropriate resources, funds, and service improvements in a timely manner.

## **6 Next Steps – Communication and Implementation of the Decision**

- 6.1 To continue to build upon the Improvement Plan process, seek to secure a deliverable work plan with the Regulator, and provide timely and necessary information for Members such as this update report, so that robust decision making, and customer improvements can take place and be implemented as required.

## **7 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The financial considerations arising from the compliance requirements have been substantially incorporated in the HRA budgets presented and approved by Council on 1 March 2021. There are however anticipated to be further significant financial implications associated with the Earlesfield Estate asbestos management, removal, and property improvements works, and these will be reported to Cabinet shortly.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Interim Director of Finance**

## **8 Legal and Governance Implications**

- 8.1 The updates to Committee allow members to track progress against key risk areas, which is to be welcomed from a governance perspective. The legal implications for non-compliance are incorporated within the risk ratings.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Shahin Ismail, Monitoring Officer**

## **9 Equality and Safeguarding Implications**

- 9.1 All the necessary safeguarding and equality issues will be identified and complied with as the necessary compliance and improvement activities take place. Each equality and safeguarding impact are carefully considered when actioning a compliance or regulatory change. This is especially so when managing such matters for vulnerable households and particularly those occupying specialist accommodation such as designated sheltered accommodation.

## **10 Risk and Mitigation**

- 10.1 The necessary risk issues, logs, and mitigations will be identified through the necessary work plans, and any work outputs agreed with the Regulator. Clearly dealing with significant compliance matters requires a comprehensive approach to risk management, particularly in respect of assessing priorities and critical actions. The necessary and

agreed risk assessment process with be discussed and agreed with the Regulator at the appropriate time to ensure outcomes are as far as possible managed and objectives achieved.

## **11 Community Safety Implications**

11.1 These will be identified as part of the compliance mitigation and implementation plans.

## **12 How will the recommendations support South Kesteven District Council's declaration of a climate emergency?**

12.1 Any capital improvement plans especially in the context of dealing with essential gas, electrical and other works will aim to maximise energy efficiency measures, and reductions in carbon emissions. Members will receive details in due course as to the inclusion of the Green Homes Grant allocation which has been previously confirmed and which will allow for the first drawing down of grant monies, to allow works to commence in July 21.

## **13 Other Implications (where significant)**

13.1 None currently.

## **14 Background Papers**

14.1 Previous reports, and correspondence with Regulator.

14.2 Report to Governance and Audit Committee and Rural Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **15 Appendices**

15.1 Appendix A - Summary Paper relating to core compliance areas.

<b>Report Timeline:</b>	Date of Publication on Forward Plan (if required)	N/A
	Previously Considered by:	N/A
	Final Decision date	N/A