


**Strategic Topic**
**Substantive Items**
**Committee Reports**

**Items below this line are for receipt and/or approval, without discussion**

**Closing Items**
**SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING**
**BOARD MEETING**

Monday 22 May 2023 at 6.00 pm  
 Endeavour House - Meriden Drive, Kingshurst

**AGENDA**

Ref	Item	Purpose	Lead	Report Type	Report Classification
1	Chair's Welcome and Introduction				
2	Apologies for Absence				
3	Declarations of Interest				
4	Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2023				
5	Action Log				
6	Chief Executives Update	Fiona Hughes – Chief Executive			
7	Preparations for Regulatory Compliance	Martyn Sargeant – Executive Director of Customer Service Transformation and Business Support			
8	Review of Standing Orders pertaining to	Sam Gilbert – Chief Financial			

	Finance and Procurement Regulations	Officer			
9	Quarter 4 2022/23 Health and Safety Report	Mark Wills – Health, Safety and Risk Manager			
10	2023/2024 Budget Horizon	Sam Gilbert – Chief Financial Officer			
11	Chair's Report from Housing Operations Committee Meeting held on 11 May 2023	Phil Hardy – Chair of Housing Operations Committee			
12	Chair's Report from Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 20 March 2023	Mark Thrasher - Chair of Audit and Risk Committee			
13	Chair's Report from Building Safety Task and Finish Group Meeting held on 17 April 2023	Richard Hyde – Chair of Board			
14	Chair's Report from Human Resources, Equalities and Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 24 April 2023	Louise Tubbs – Chair of Human Resources, Equalities and Remuneration			
15	Quarter 4 2022/23 Performance Exception Report	Becci Youlden - Head of Customer Experience			
16	Forward Plan	Fiona Hughes – Chief Executive			
17	Any Other Business				
18	Review of Meeting				
1					
2					

## SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY 2023 MINUTES

Present: Richard Hyde (Chair), Nigel Page, April Halpin, Phil Hardy, Louise Tubbs, Dave Pinwell, Bernie Donnelly, Gail Sleight, Mark Thrasher

Officers: Fiona Hughes, Martyn Sargeant, Mike Brymer, Sam Gilbert, Mary Moroney, Mark Wills, Carol Trappett, Becci Youlden

### 1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Richard welcomed all to the meeting and advised that item 14, Asset Management Strategy, would be taken above the line as it needs to be discussed and approved.

### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mary Morrissey.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

### 4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 8 NOVEMBER 2022

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

#### DECISION THE BOARD

(i) **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held 8 November 2022

### 5. ACTION LOG

The Action log was noted and it was agreed that a further update on 1122-4 will be provided at the next meeting.

#### DECISION THE BOARD

(i) **NOTED** the action log

### 6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

The restructure of the Executive Team has now been completed with the appointment of the Executive Director of Operations, Darren Baggs who will join SCH on 6 March 2023. Further restructures below the executive level have commenced and a presentation on the key drivers is included at item 11, Chair's Report on Housing Operations Committee of 6 February 2023.

Encouraging tenants to report and responding to damp and mould remains a high priority across the sector and a workshop was recently held with health professionals with further plans to meet with community groups. It was acknowledged that although tenant behaviours can exacerbate problems with

## **SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY 2023**

damp and mould it is very clear that it remains the responsibility of landlords to address problems.

In response to a Board member question it was confirmed that in cases of disrepair the solicitors acting for SCH are clear that access should be permitted to address damp and mould and there have been no significant issues to-date.

The SCHape Panel have been reviewing the policy for dealing with reports of damp and also in developing a leaflet giving advice to tenants.

It was agreed to provide the timescale for converting properties identified for use to accommodate refugees and it was recognised that this is a very sensitive issue. There is funding to employ a Support Worker who will be employed by whichever organisation the Council appoints as managing agent for the accommodation.

The Kingshurst Development scheme is high risk but the key decisions are taken by the Council, through the Leader and Portfolio holder and the project will be phased to ensure that work can be put out to tender in a carefully planned manner to mitigate the risks as far as possible. More information will be provided to the next meeting of the Housing Operations Committee in May.

### **DECISION**

- (i) **NOTED** the contents of the report

## **7. DELIVERY PLAN 2023/24**

It was noted that work on the Delivery Plan commenced last Autumn and would be presented to the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board, before being considered by the Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Wellbeing for final approval.

Following the last review by Board there have been changes to Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) around voids and rent collection. It was noted that for some of the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) there is very little historic data for SCH or the sector generally making it difficult to set realistic targets or provide benchmarking. It was also acknowledged that there is a need to set targets that are realistic as well as provide some stretch.

### **DECISION**

- (i) **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the content of the Delivery Plan for 2023/ 24 which will be shared with the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board and the Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Wellbeing for approval.

## **SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY 2023**

### **8. HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY REPORT OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2022**

The report included a legislative update at appendix 1 and an analysis of reported incidents at appendix 2. The Building Safety Implementation Plan (BSIP) and composite safety report were reported to the first meeting of the Building Safety Task and Finish Group on 23 January 2023. At the first meeting the terms of reference, priorities and programme of meetings for the new group were also agreed.

The Regulator of Social Housing has requested evidence to demonstrate that Landlords have systems in place to identify and deal with damp and mould in their homes, and that they are addressing risks to their tenants' health. The regulator will review this information and, will take appropriate action where needed.

A new approach to Health & Safety Audits has been introduced with the focus being on topics rather than service area audits and will include walk around inspections.

There was a significant increase in the number of incidents reported in quarter 3 2022/23 with the number increasing from 27 to 41. Two of the staff related incidents were RIDDOR reportable accidents due to 7 day absence but there were no RIDDOR reportable resident accidents. The increase in incidents is partly due to better awareness of the reporting tool.

Board asked for more detail on learning /actions identified from near misses for future reports and this was noted.

#### **DECISION**

- |       |              |  |
|-------|--------------|--|
| (i)   | <b>NOTED</b> | the content of the report  |
| (ii)  | <b>NOTED</b> | Appendix 1 – Legislative update  |
| (iii) | <b>NOTED</b> | Appendix 2 – Accident /Incident Reporting analysis for Quarter 3 2022/23 |

### **9. REVENUE & CAPITAL FINANCIAL MONITORING AND FORECAST 2022/23 – DECEMBER 2022 (QUARTER 3)**

At the end of the quarter (31 December 2022) there was a forecast revenue overspend of +£1.238million (6.2%) by the end of the financial year. The majority of the overspend (+£1.308million) is attributable to unavoidable inflationary and contractual cost pressures, leaving a net underspend of (£70,000) from other variances.

At the time of setting the SCH budget, the assumptions made for pay increases, price increase for Biomass wood pellets, energy/fuel inflation and contractual inflation were less than experienced.

The impact of pay inflation, utility cost inflation, contractual inflation and increases to fuel costs have been built into the latest approved SCH 2023/24 budget. The additional cost of Biomass should be offset by the increase in charges during 2023/24

## **SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY 2023**

and where the increased energy costs occur within communal areas, full cost recovery was included within the review of service charges.

The SMBC Cabinet have approved a £14.788m carry forward from the capital programme to 2023/24, mainly due to slippage of the project for the replacement of Spandrel Panels and redevelopments at Kingshurst Village Centre and Lakeside.

Board questioned whether there was sufficient capacity to deliver the capital programme in 2023/24 and were assured that there are resources in place and the Spandrel Panels project will be delivered via a specialist contractor and developments at Kingshurst and Lakeside will have their own project delivery team.

Due to the Management of Change process to restructure teams across the business there is a potential for incurring early leaver costs and Board members agreed to use the Budget Strategy Reserves for this purpose.

The total cost for the project to replace spandrel panels used in enclosed balconies and communal areas in 16 of our high rise blocks of £8.755million was approved by Full Cabinet on 3 December 2020 and approval to enter a contract greater than £2.500million was given by Full Cabinet on 10 February 2022. The Board were briefed on the enhanced financial checks on the contractor appointed to deliver the spandrel panels project and that work and payments will be phased to mitigate any potential risk around this high value contract.

### **DECISION**

- (i) **NOTED** the revenue and capital forecast to the year end for the current financial year 2022/23.
- (ii) **NOTED** the current and forecast reserves position
- (iii) **NOTED** the award of the contract for the replacement of spandrel panels
- (iv) **APPROVED** the use of the Restructure Reserve to fund early leaver costs.

## **10. 2023/2024 BUDGET UPDATE**

The outcome of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) consultation on a rent increase cap was announced as part of the Autumn Statement at a maximum 7%. The 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account rent report considered by Cabinet on 9 February 2023 included a model based on a 5% rent increase with a comparison for a 7% rent increase. After careful consideration, the decision was to increase rents by 5% taking account of the impact of the cost of living crisis.

Board were asked to consider whether they wished to apply the same (5%) rent increase to SCH owned stock and shared ownership rents and agreed to retain parity with applying the same increase for all properties. The number of properties involved is relatively small and a larger increase in rent would not have a significant impact on budgets.

The Revenue and Capital Financial Monitoring and Forecast 2022/23 – December 2022 (Quarter 3) report outlines the continuing issues around damp & mould and that a short-term resource has been put in place to

## **SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY 2023**

supplement the work of the Responsive Repairs and Better Places Services. The overall cost of this resource and materials for an approximate 6-month period is £154,000 which will fall between both 2022/23 and 2023/24. The Board approved the use of the General Reserve up to £102,000 to continue this programme of works into 2023/24.

Following a question about applying target rents on new lettings Sam Gilbert agreed to investigate and inform Board members. Any additional income generated from increased rents on relets would go into Housing Revenue Account reserves.

### **DECISION**

- (i) **NOTED** the outcome of the DLUHC consultation
- (ii) **NOTED** the HRA 2023/24 budget approved by Full Cabinet on 9 February 2023
- (iii) **APPROVED** the SCH owned property rents at 5% increase
- (iv) **APPROVED** SCH owned shared ownership rents at 5%
- (v) **APPROVED** the proposed schedule of fees and charges
- (vi) **APPROVED** the use of up to a maximum of £102,000 from General Reserves to fund work to address damp and mould

### **11. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM HOUSING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2022 AND 6 FEBRUARY 2023**

The chair of Committee noted that it was good to see members of the SCHape panel at the meeting in November to present their report on support for cost of living crisis and that at the meeting in February Committee had agreed to receive a further report on Mobysoft Rentsense in six months' time before SCH assumes liability for paying for the service.

The chair recommended all to read the Better Social Housing Review and proposed that at a future away day it would be worth having a focus on core purpose.

### **DECISION**

- (i) **NOTED** the content of the reports on the two meetings held in November 2022 and February 2023

### **12. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2022**

The chair of Committee noted the need for the full Board to set the risk appetite so that future projects could be aligned correctly and suggested this as a topic for the next away day. It was noted that a workshop had recently been held on the specification for procurement in relation to the OneSCH project and the outcome of this work will be reported to the next Committee meeting in March.

### **DECISION**

- (i) **NOTED** the matters considered by the Committee

**13. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM BUILDING SAFETY TASK AND FINISH GROUP MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2023.**

The chair noted that there was a lot of detail around compliance considered with positive challenge given to ensure robustness of data presented.

**DECISION**

- (i) **NOTED** the actions taken by the Committee

**14. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Board expressed some concern that the strategy sets targets that would be difficult to achieve without significant additional resources such as achieving net zero for properties and also that we have a significant number of ageing tower blocks. It was confirmed that the strategy will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated with the initial focus being on the next 10 years. There are sufficient resources to deliver the net zero targets set for 2031 in the strategy.

**DECISION**

- (i) **APPROVED** the Asset Management Strategy.

**15. SCH SAFEGUARDING, EXPLOITATION AND DOMESTIC ABUSE (SEDA)**

Noted without discussion.

**DECISION**

- (i) **NOTED** contents of the report.

**16. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT**

Noted without discussion.

**DECISION**

- (i) **NOTED** those indicators, and the associated narrative, where the target performance has not been achieved.

**17. BOARD FORWARD PLAN**

Noted without discussion.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 22 May 2023**



**SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY 2023**

The meeting ended at 18:35

Signed by chair: .....Date: .....

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## Solihull Community Housing Board Action Log

Green = completed and will be removed from next log and a record is kept by the Governance Team

Amber = in progress due to be completed by due date

Red = not completed or unlikely to be completed by due date

### 1. Actions outstanding / pending / in progress

Ref	Action	Responsible Person	Due Date	Comments	Status
1122-4	Contact Legal Services to determine whether leases can be amended to include the leaseholders to prove annual gas service is undertaken.	Mike Brymer	January 2023	Legal Services have been approached for advice on changing the lease for future sales to include a new covenant about gas safety inspections. This is a viable option that will be pursued. Legal opinion has also been sought on feasibility of retrospectively amending leases for properties sold previously and this is being reviewed. The current options available are to SCH: 1. Gain access in response to an emergency situation; and 2. Agree access by mutual consent with the Leaseholder.	
0223-1	Provide the timescale for converting properties identified for use to accommodate refugees	Mike Brymer	May 2023	Authorisation has been received this month to carry out internal and external decoration to the properties. A replacement water tank is also required for the Block. Investigatory works are also being carried out to the gas distribution network. It is anticipated that works will be completed by September / October 2023 subject to any unforeseen issues with the gas distribution network.	
0223-4	Application of target rents on reletting properties to be investigated and reported back to full board	Sam Gilbert	May 2023	As confirmed in the 'Rent Standard – April 2023' produced by the Regulator of Social Housing there is no limitation on the application of the formula rent at relet. The only limitation relates to existing tenants and the cap at a 7% increase.	

				Therefore, SCH will continue to relet properties at formula rent.	
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## SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

BOARD MEETING: MONDAY 22 MAY 2023

### REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

#### Chief Executive's Update

#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out key areas of progress delivered through the Chief Executive since the last Board meeting and provides an update to the Board.

#### 2. Recommendation – Item for Noting

- 2.1 The Board is recommended to:

(i) **NOTE** the content of the report.

#### 3. Executive Team and Organisational Structure

- 3.1 The Executive Team is now complete and Darren Baggs has completed his induction and is now beginning to pick up oversight of delivery operations although of course this remains a transitional process. With regard to service level restructures:

- The housing senior service managers have been appointed for tenancy management, community safety including estate services and finally home options
- Governance and other support services have been integrated into a business support team
- Complaints has become part of customer contact
- Consultation is underway regarding other service level restructures

- 3.2 A more detailed presentation of the organisational restructure has been presented to Housing Operations Committee and appendix 1 shows the executive and senior management elements of the organisational structure

#### 4. Organisational Planning

- 4.1 The Executive Team will have an away day in June to discuss organisational planning including:
- SCH strategic vision refresh
  - Management agreement review and 3-year delivery plan
  - SCH financial plan
  - Preparations for regulation

- 4.2 The outcome of discussions at the ELT away day will inform the board/exec away day in October

## **5. Management Agreement Review**

- 5.1 SMBC have confirmed that they would like to review the management agreement between SMBC and SCH and they are currently considering the scope, process and timetable for review, including whether there is a requirement for government sign off. As a signatory to the management agreement, clearly the process and timetable will need to allow for SCH and board engagement and SMBC will ensure account is taken of the need to fully engage with the SCH Board. Further update will be provided once greater clarity is available from SMBC.

## **6. Financial Challenge**

- 6.1 Our approach to the financial challenge has been a key focus in recent months and this will continue to be an absolute priority for the team as we identify savings across the SCH budget and the Housing Revenue Account. A separate report is included in item 10 on the board agenda which sets out the challenge and recommended approach.

## **7. Staff Conference**

- 7.1 The first staff conference since Covid took place on April 19<sup>th</sup> at the National Conference Centre. Thanks to the Board members who attended and were part of the day. There were over 280 SCH employees present, together with support colleagues from the Council, and it was a rare opportunity to get everybody together and a great opportunity to launch the Delivery Plan for 23/24 to all staff.
- 7.2 The highlight of the day was undoubtedly Eartha Pond, a former Arsenal and Chelsea player, who now leads an educational charity working in London and has been part of the Grenfell recovery effort. She inspired us with her presentation and everybody left on a high. We also heard from Housemark's Director of Data and Business Intelligence, Jonathan Cox, who provided an interesting insight into how SCH compares with the national picture, including some encouraging comparisons, as well as some challenges to be faced.
- 7.3 The first keynote presentation at the beginning of the day was delivered by the Chief Executive. The presentation covered challenges ahead for the housing sector and SCH and highlighted a number of significant and tragic events to remind us of the importance of listening to customers to make sure we deliver improvements where they are needed. We were also joined by our wellbeing

partners, Fika, who introduced a new platform being made available to all SCH employees to support their resilience and development.

- 7.4 Other highlights included an opportunity to visit stands organised by SCH teams, to help us get to know other parts of the business, and also awarding the SCH Team of the Year, which went to Home Options for their work dealing with the significant increase in homelessness and the refugee influx. Worthy runners-up were the teams that have worked on the sprinkler project and the transfer of properties from Bromford Homes.
- 7.5 Looking ahead to build on the success of the conference, there are a range of organisational/development challenges for SCH including continued focus on organisational culture. This will need resource and it is positive to be able to report that interviews have taken place for the post of Organisational Development and Training Manager, for which we hope to be able to report an outcome at the Board meeting.
- 7.6 The Communications team has produced a short summary video of the day, which you can view on [YouTube](#).

## **8. Award Nominations**

- 8.1 We are delighted to have been shortlisted for a number of prestigious housing awards. We have two shortlisted nominations for Housing Heroes set to take place in Manchester towards the end of June.
- 8.2 The commitment and dedication of those working on the sprinkler installation project has been recognised in the 'team of the year' category. We are also delighted that our operative, Leigh Mundy, is through to the shortlist for 'apprentice of the year.'
- 8.3 In addition to this, the work around the sprinkler installation has also been recognised in the forthcoming Fire Safety Matters awards. Our project partners Earlybirds and Kentec have been shortlisted in the 'fire safety project of the year' category.

## **9. Governance Support**

- 9.1 With our Head of Governance, Mary Moroney, retiring last month, it was good to be able to recognise her 44 years of service to housing in Solihull. Following the restructure, coordination of customer feedback has moved to Customer Services, and governance will be managed by the new Business Support team. As we take this opportunity to review our processes and systems, feedback from Board members as to what works well and what could be improved is welcome – please contact the Business Support Manager, Sarah Brookes. Moving forward, the role of the Company Secretary

will be covered by the Executive Director – Customer Service, Transformation and Business Support.

## **10. Customer Experience – Year End**

- 10.1 Acuity have recently presented ELT and Housing Operations Committee with the year-end results from the transactional and perception (STAR) surveys.
- 10.2 Nationally, customer satisfaction has decreased significantly over the last 12 months. However, our overall satisfaction levels have remained stable in comparison with the previous year. Acuity highlighted some high levels of satisfaction, increasing satisfaction in some areas (against national trends) and strong performance with other landlords. The full results were presented to Housing Operations Committee at the last meeting.
- 10.3 The newly formed Business Intelligence Team will be focussing on using the verbatim feedback and key driver analysis to strengthen the way we use the voice of the customer to identify improvements.

## **11. Damp and Mould**

- 11.1 Damp and mould has continued to be an area of focus and high demand. The Housing Operations Committee has recently received an annual update on the progress and activities being carried out to combat instances of damp and mould and the SCH Board's Building Safety Sub-committee receives a quarterly update on activities as part of the overall Building Safety Composite Report. Key areas to highlight since my last update to the Board include the development of a Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy that has been reviewed by the SCHape Panel. The Policy has been developed to reflect the importance of this matter as a key policy area.
- 11.2 As you will recall, the Board agreed to additional temporary funding to assist with providing additional resources in response to the increase in operational activity that has been required over recent months. Some key information includes the continued significant increase in Disrepair Claims received during the previous financial year, amounting to 85 claims (double the 42 received in 2021/22 – which was more than the three previous financial years combined). Similarly, the number of direct enquiries with reference to damp and mould has also doubled over the previous 12 months. Improved reporting is in place so that management information can be identified and report more easily.
- 11.3 Technical staff have received accredited training in this area to assist with continual professional development and an investment in additional diagnostic equipment has also been purchased to assist with property inspections. The National Federation of ALMOs has recently published a further briefing on damp and mould. Government have announced a 'Decency Fund' of which



just over £2million has been provided to Solihull as part of the West Midlands Consortium. An indicative amount of £1.7million has been identified for schemes within the Council Housing Stock.

## **12. Carbon Reduction/Net Zero**

12.1 As the Board will recall, a key strategic objective of the Joint asset Management Strategy is supporting the Council's net zero plans by investing in 'greening' our homes. Funding has and will remain a key challenge in achieving this objective and we have been clear that we will seek to maximise grant funding opportunities where they align with the needs of the council housing stock. Listed below are the current and potential funding streams that are being focussed upon:

- Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 2 (LADS2) – level of grant funding received was £149k with an additional £128k funded through the SCH Capital programme budget
- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1 – secured £500k funding to support a programme of EWI to around 50 homes. Working closely with colleagues at SMBC an offer for private homes in Alston Road has also been completed (using SMBC's sustainable warmth funding) at the time of writing there were 23 private homes being progressed.
- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2 – As with Wave 1 we have joined a consortium led by West Midlands Combined authority (WMCA), for SCH a programme of around 100 system-built homes with External Wall Insulation, the total project cost is estimated at £2.26m. Our grant funding allocation to support this is £1.25m. We have two years to deliver the programme, between April 2023 and March 2025.
- Social Housing Decency Fund – A newly announced fund from Government, awaiting Treasury approval, in response to their recent enquiries regarding the condition of social housing. As part of the grant awarded to the WMCA, Solihull has been awarded £2.06m with an indicative £1.7m allocated for the council housing stock.

12.2 There are other funding streams which are primarily aimed at private homes such as ECO, Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) and most recently the 'Great British insulation scheme' (GBIS). Although they do target private stock, there is provision to include a small proportion of social housing properties, which perform poorly and / or where households are in greatest need.

## **13. Structural Surveys**

13.1 SCH Board agreed £1.4million from SCH Reserves to fund the completion of Structural Surveys to each of the 37 High Rise Residential Buildings (HRRBs). Following a procurement process, structural engineers, Curtins Ltd, have

been appointed. Phase 1 of the project to carry out desk top assessments of all information currently held / available on the HRRBs has commenced and reports being drafted for review.

- 13.2 Alongside the finalisation of Phase 1, preparation for Phase 2 of the commission, physical surveys and sampling has started to commence, this Phase is expected to be completed within 18 months. Where possible, the plan is to coordinate the work programme so intrusive survey work is synchronised with either the sprinkler or spandrel panel works to minimise both costs to the projects and inconvenience for residents.
- 13.3 Presurvey works in readiness for Phase 2 have commenced at Kingshurst House, as part of the works being carried out, a structural defect was identified to the pedestrian bridge that spans the historic moat site for residents to gain access to the building. Investigation into options to address the structural defect are currently being considered and as a safety measure access to the building via the bridge has been closed.

#### **14. Kingshurst Village Centre Update**

- 14.1 Onsite demolition and enabling works are progressing well with the current contract projected to complete on time and to budget, works are due to finish at the end of July 2023.
- 14.2 The rephasing of wider scheme to address current market conditions sees a move to construct the 25 social rented dwellings and associated highway section agreement works on the former Mountford Pub site as phase 1 of the construction programme. This simpler housing contract over 12 months addresses current supply chain nervousness over pricing longer contracts in these adverse market conditions.
- 14.3 The revised phasing plan has also enabled further design considerations to be taken into account on the main Community, Health & Retail building (CHR) due to be delivered in phase 2. Working alongside ISC colleagues the CHR building detailed design is progressing to RIBA stage 4 ready for FBC approval.
- 14.4 Wilmott Dixon (WD) are currently appointed under both a Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA) and the JCT minors works enabling contract which is currently on-site. The PCSA is all but complete with the exception of the CHR detailed fitout design which is on-going and is expected to complete late Summer 2023.
- 14.5 On the 28 April 2023, WD returned a framework compliant build cost of £6.95m (including site abnormalities) to construct the 25 net zero homes units on the former Mountford pub site. WD also provided costs for undertaking Highway Section works which are advantageous to complete at the same time

as the Mountford site, by doing this we prevent temporary works, duplication of works and minimise disruption to local residents and the new residents of the Mountford properties, these section works total £795k. The full market tested WD price return is currently being reviewed and assessed for VFM by our independent cost consultants Baqus.

- 14.6 A Cabinet report is currently being prepared and due to go before members in June. The report outlines progress to date, outlines the proposed funding strategy and seeks permission to enter into a build contract to undertake the construction of the 25 units on the Mountford site and associated section works. The total scheme cost is expected to be in the region of £7.850m and includes a contingency allowance.

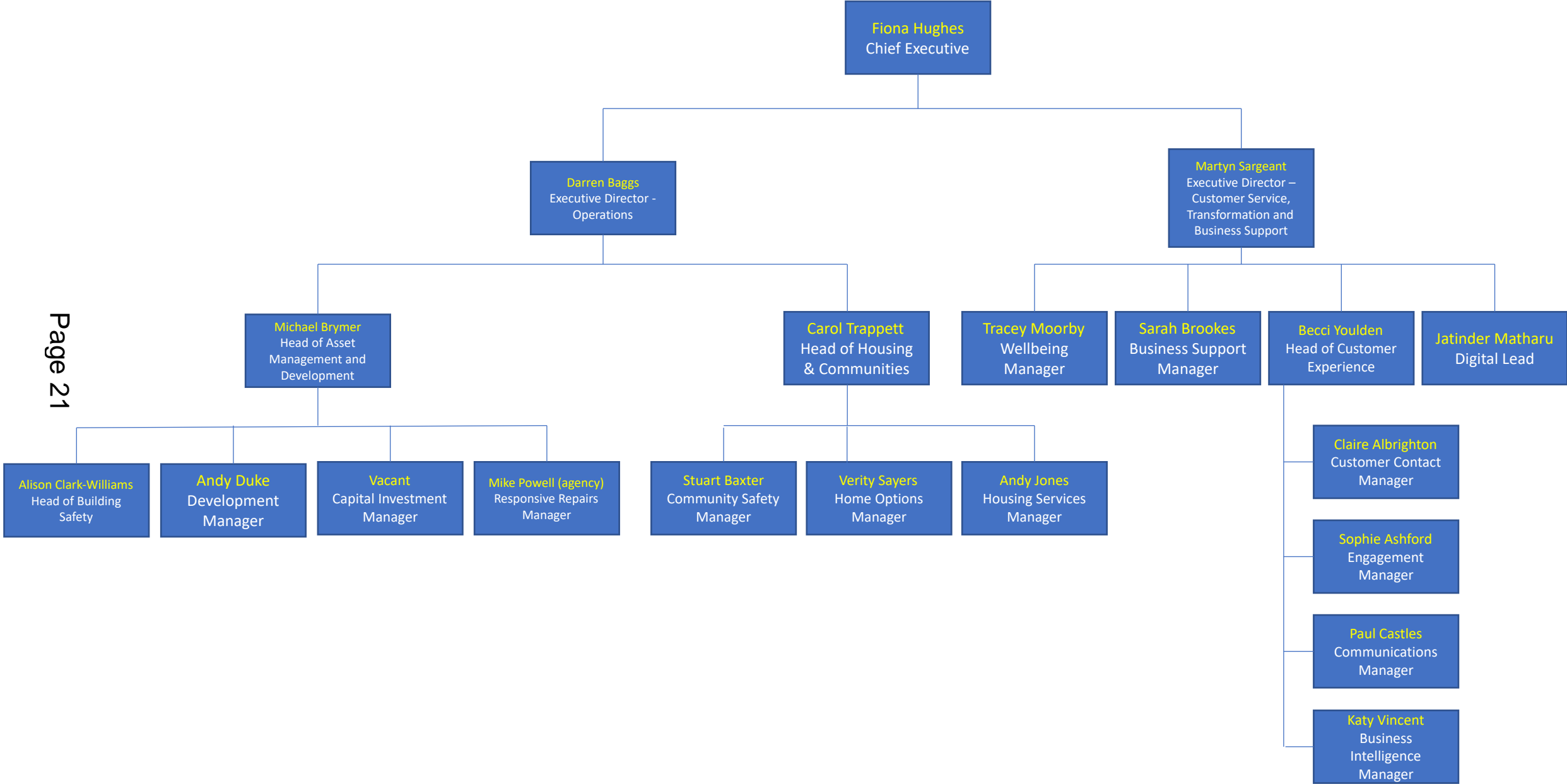
## **15. Sudan Evacuees**

- 15.1 The evacuation of British Citizens from Sudan at the end of April saw seven flights arriving at Birmingham Airport in seven days, bringing around one thousand adults and children. SMBC and SCH rapidly secured emergency hotel accommodation across the West Midlands. Some of the new arrivals had follow-on travel plans and only stayed for one night.
- 15.2 Local authorities from across the West Midlands offered packages of support to the new arrivals. For Solihull, this included a number of SCH staff working on site at the hotels with SMBC Resettlement Team and Entraide to provide welfare checks and emergency support such as medication, travel, food vouchers, nappies and baby milk, support by wider networks of GPs, Adult Social Care, and so on.
- 15.3 Moving into May, SCH estimate there will be around 40 households, a mixture of single people and families who will still be in emergency hotel accommodation and are owed a homeless duty and we will be working in collaboration with wider West Midlands colleagues on a fair allocation.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Fiona Hughes  
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# SCH: senior management structure



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## SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

### BOARD MEETING 22 MAY 2023

#### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICE TRANSFORMATION & BUSINESS SUPPORT

##### Preparing for regulatory changes

#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Board on work underway to ensure SCH is 'regulation ready' in response to changes being introduced to the regulation regime.

#### 2. Recommendation – Items for Noting / Approval

- 2.1 The Board is recommended to:

- (i) **NOTE** the current work to ensure SCH is ready for regulatory changes.

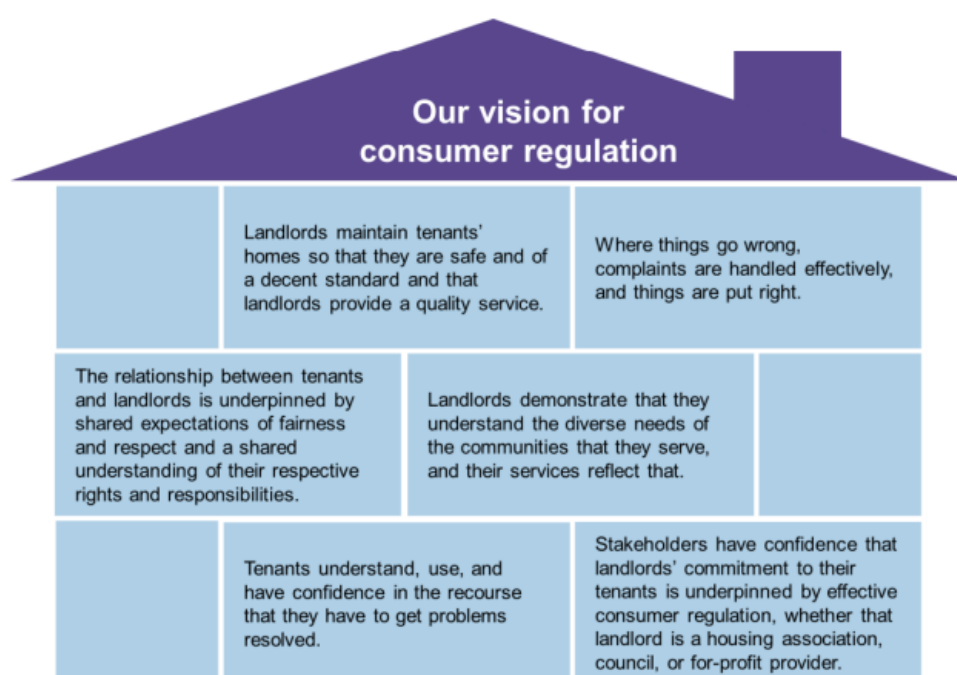
#### 3. Background

- 3.1 Over the last two years, the Regulator of Social Housing and the government have undertaken preparatory work leading towards changes in the regulatory regime for social housing. In particular, this has focused on:
- Changes to the requirements around consumer standards, including proposals to implement a new assurance regime, which is expected to involve an element of inspection.
  - Tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs), intended to enable tenants to better understand how their landlord was performing against a set of national benchmarks.
  - Increasing professionalisation of the housing sector, supporting employees to develop their skills and qualifications and providing greater confidence to customers.
- 3.2 A key aspect of the strengthened regulation is its focus on the council, as the owner of the housing stock and therefore the landlord. It will be important, therefore, to ensure assurance arrangements are in place across the council and SCH.
- 3.3 The Strategic Housing Board (SHB), chaired by Mary Morrissey will have oversight of preparedness for the introduction of the new regulatory regime.
- 3.4 A 'Regulation Ready' sub-group of SHB will be established to develop detailed plans and this will be led by the SCH Chief Executive, Fiona Hughes.

- 3.5 In due course, an internal audit will be undertaken to provide assurance that arrangements across SMBC and SCH to prepare for regulation are both robust and appropriate.
- 3.6 The Board will be aware of increased regulatory oversight of building safety matters and a strengthened approach by the Housing Ombudsman to the management of complaints. Although not considered as part of this report, they are part of the wider operating context for SCH.

#### 4. Consumer standards

- 4.1 Taking its steer from the government's legislation, the Regulator has sought to reframe its approach, particularly in relation to 'rebalancing the relationship between tenants and landlords'.<sup>1</sup>
- 4.2 The diagram<sup>2</sup> below summarises the Regulator's approach:



We have also set out three tests for the success of the new consumer regulation framework.

1. It must make a meaningful difference to tenants.
2. Landlords must be able to deliver its expectations.
3. We must be able to regulate against it.

<sup>1</sup> *Reshaping Consumer Regulation: Our Implementation Plan*, Regulator of Social Housing, Jan 2023, p2

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p4



- 4.3 This also ties in with the Housing Ombudsman's drive to improve complaint handling and improve service delivery standards.
- 4.4 Once the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill has received Royal Assent (expected to be before parliament's summer recess) the Regulator plans to run a consultation on a revised set of consumer standards. This will provide an indication of the detail behind the six potential standards<sup>3</sup>:
- Safety
  - Quality
  - Neighbourhood
  - Transparency
  - Engagement and accountability
  - Tenancy
- 4.5 By way of preparation for the new consumer standards, an external review of compliance with current consumer standards will be undertaken and will identify any key gaps.

## **5. Professionalisation**

- 5.1 The government's Social Housing White Paper also referenced the need to raise professional standards in the housing sector, in order to ensure all employees were equipped with the knowledge, qualifications and values required to effectively and appropriately serve customers.
- 5.2 Within the sector, championing this agenda has primarily been led by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), which has developed various tools and programmes to support housing providers. To help organisations and individuals identify development needs CIH has developed seven professional standards:
- Integrity
  - Inclusive
  - Ethical
  - Knowledge
  - Skilled
  - Advocate
  - Leadership
- 5.3 SCH has invested from its training budget during 2022/23 to address areas of development identified in the corporate training plan. Further work has been carried out to provide a baseline of the qualification level of managers across SCH as a precursor to undertaking a gap analysis and subsequently producing an organisational development plan.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p9

## **6. Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)**

- 6.1 In September 2022, following a consultation process, a final set of TSMs was issued. These became regulatory from April 2023, with the first figures to be reported to the RSH in March 2024.
- 6.2 As well as providing residents with information on performance and insight to providers on where they can improve, the Regulator will also use the information as a source of intelligence in making judgements about whether a landlord is meeting the regulatory standards.
- 6.3 The TSMs are made up of 22 measures split into satisfaction measures, based on a standardised perception survey (STAR), and management measures, which quantify activities across a range of services. Alongside the publication of the TSMs, the Regulator has published the technical requirements landlords will need to follow to produce the management information and the tenant perception surveys.
- 6.4 Acuity, one of the lead providers of housing sector research, has been carrying out perception surveys for SCH for nearly two years. Officers have recently been working with Acuity to ensure the methodology and questions meet the requirements of the TSMs. Data in line with the TSMs has been collected by SCH since April 2022 and the approach has been refined over the year as further guidance has been made available.
- 6.5 The full set of TSMs has been incorporated into the SCH key performance indicators for 2023-24, so will be the subject of regular reporting to this Board.

## **7. Preparing for regulation**

- 7.1 SCH has identified a small project team who will take the lead on ensuring readiness for new standards. The team will report regularly to SCH's Executive Leadership Team and an overview of the state of readiness, including work completed and scheduled will be presented at the next Board meeting. This will be chaired by Martyn Sargeant and will also report into the Strategic Housing Board through the 'Regulation Ready' sub-group.
- 7.2 Key pieces of work over the next quarter include:
  - Analysis of compliance with existing consumer standards (supported by external advisor).
  - Continued refinement of the TSM methodology to ensure compliance (supported by Housemark).
  - Development of benchmarking (as more data becomes available) to understand comparative performance.
  - Analysis of organisational development priorities against the professional standards (dependent on resourcing, subject to recruitment).
  - Review of policies and procedures.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 There are no specific cost implications arising from this information report. The costs of delivering services are covered by the annual budget setting process.

## **9. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 9.1 There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report.

## **10. Risk Management Implications**

- 10.1 The risks arising from failing to meet specific targets are included within the general risk management framework.

## **11. Tenant Involvement/Consultation**

- 11.1 There has been no specific consultation in relation to this report; however, the SCHAPE panel considers performance information as part of its scrutiny role.

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**SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING  
BOARD MEETING: 22 MAY 2023  
REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

**FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND RULES FOR CONTRACT  
UPDATE**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek the SCH Board approval for the updated Financial Regulations and Rules for Contract.

**2. Recommendation – Items for Noting and Approving**

- 2.1 The Board is requested to:

- (i) **APPROVE** the updated Financial Regulations and Rules for Contract.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The SCH Standing Orders are revised annually and the SCH Board are now due to receive these from the Executive Director of Customer Service, Transformation and Business Support at the next meeting following the departure of the Company Secretary.
- 3.2 Part of this document are the company's Financial Regulations and Rules for Contract. Work has been undertaken to update both these documents to ensure they reflect recent changes such as the introduction of the new Oracle System and the movement of the Procurement Service to the Head of Procurement at the Council.
- 3.3 An unmarked updated copy of both the Financial Regulations and Rules for Contracts are attached at Appendices A and B.

**4. Financial Regulations**

- 4.1 The amendments made to Financial Regulations are summarised at Appendix C for reference. Any minor amendments to grammar, layout or paragraph numbering are not included.
- 4.2 Attached at Appendix D is a simplified summary for staff to refer to headed "Key Messages". This is the first year we've introduced such a document and we would welcome any views the Board may have.

## **5. Rules for Contract**

- 5.1 The Head of Procurement has rewritten the Rules for Contract which are attached at Appendix B and therefore we have not provided a summary of the changes.
- 5.2 The introduction of the Oracle Cloud system has enabled new processes to be designed as well as some streamlining, improving transparency and governance to ensure there are consistent processes across both the Council and SCH.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The financial implications are included within the content of this report.

## **7. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 7.1 None specifically arising.

## **8. Risk Management Implications**

- 8.1 Financial risks are addressed in the main body of the report and significant financial risks are included within the relevant risk registers.

## **9. Value for Money and Efficiency Considerations/Implications**

- 9.1 None specifically – this report is a monitoring report detailing the usage of available funds across the organisation.

## **10. Tenant Involvement/Consultation**

- 10.1 None required.

## **11. Consistent with Business Plan?**

- 11.1 The operating budget incorporates matters arising within the Business Plan and this report considers progress against delivering the objectives of SCH financially.

### **REPORT AUTHOR:**

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**Changes to the Financial Regulations**

Para.	Change Description
1.1	New Paragraph
1.2	Added reference to Board
2.1	Reference to Revenue added into paragraph.
2.5	New paragraph
2.8	Added “external” to grants and reference to T&Cs being provided to Finance
4.0	New section on Leasing created (no change to paragraphs)
5.0	New section on Security of Assets (paragraphs moved from section 1)
5.2	New paragraph
5.3	New paragraph
5.4	New paragraph
6.3	New paragraph
6.4	Reference to “report” replaced with “information”
6.8	Added “grant funded activity”
6.9	New paragraph
7.4	New paragraph
7.5	New paragraph
7.6	New paragraph
7.7	New paragraph
7.8	New paragraph
7.9	New paragraph
8.9	New paragraph
9.4	Reference to invoices requiring a PO number
9.5	Reference to receipting goods and what it means
9.8	Revised limits on approved levels of delegations
11.0	New section on Expense Claims
12.4	New paragraph
12.6	Added reference to frequency
12.10	New paragraph
18.2	Reference to “relevant” officer rather than “authorised”
18.2	Added “or fraud”
18.8	New paragraph

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**Appendix A****Section 3          Financial regulations**

1.        General
2.        Revenue Budgets
3.        Capital Programme Budgets
4.        Leasing
5.        Security of Assets
6.        Control of Expenditure
7.        Financial reporting
8.        Income
9.        Payment of Accounts
10.      Value Added Tax and Construction Industry Scheme (CIS)
11.      Expenses Claims
12.      Petty cash and purchase cards
13.      Salaries and pensions
14.      Treasury Management
15.      Risk Management
16.      Insurance
17.      Audit
18.      Fraud and Corruption
19.      Computer Services
20.      Employment Termination Costs

## Section 3

## Financial Regulations

### 1 GENERAL

- 1.1 These Regulations shall apply to all staff and Board Members and cover all company activities including all activities undertaken in line with the Management Agreement with Solihull MBC, additional Council Service Level Agreements and any activity undertaken on behalf of third parties.
- 1.2 All staff and Board Members have a general responsibility for taking reasonable action to provide for the security of the assets of the company under their control and for avoiding loss. They are expected to exercise due economy and efficiency in the use of resources, in the execution of approved plans, and in the running of services. The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) will ensure that appropriate Financial Regulations are in place for SCH. The Assistant Director of Finance & Property Services for the Council will carry out the role of the Chief Financial Officer.
- 1.3 The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for maintaining the accounts of the Company. The accounting system in use shall be as laid down by the Chief Financial Officer and agreed with the Board and the Council.
- 1.4 The Chief Financial Officer may report any case of non-compliance with these regulations and any case of non-compliance with the authorised accounting system to the Audit & Risk Committee after consultation with the Chief Executive. The Company may take disciplinary or other action against anyone to whom these Regulations apply but who fails to comply with them.
- 1.5 The Chief Financial Officer may issue such instructions, give such advice or establish such procedures as are in their opinion necessary to ensure the proper administration of the Company's financial affairs. Any such instructions, advice or procedures termed "Accounting Instructions" by the Chief Financial Officer shall be applied as though they were part of these regulations.
- 1.6 Members of the Executive Leadership Team are responsible for the maintenance of adequate levels of internal control. The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for ensuring that financial controls operated by ELT / Heads of Service are adequate by ensuring that detailed financial procedures and systems are prepared, documented and maintained, incorporating the principles of internal control.
- 1.7 Members of the Executive Leadership Team must establish appropriate organisation structures to ensure:
  - Work is organised to maximise efficiency in the use of resources, eliminate duplication of effort, achieve objectives and plans and maintain a disciplined control environment;
  - Adequate resources are deployed at all levels to meet objectives and plans;
  - Appropriate communication takes place; and
  - A framework of staff development which fosters commitment to the organisation, its objectives and plans and its control environment.

- 1.8 ELT members are responsible for ensuring that the following rules in relation to segregation of duties are observed:
- Areas of activity involving risk are separated (e.g. the duty of providing, calculating, checking and recording sums due to or from the Company shall be separated from the duty of collecting or disbursing these sums);
  - Clear lines of authority are established;
  - All areas of work are either independently supervised, validated or reconciled; and
  - Competence and accountability are promoted.
- 1.9 Unintentional errors have a high chance of being detected through independent supervisory checks. By following these rules, the risk of intentional errors or abuse and the opportunity for collusion are also reduced.
- 1.10 ELT members are responsible for ensuring that appropriate authorisation and approval procedures are established to ensure:
- Management policies and plans are adhered to;
  - Only legitimate activities are performed;
  - The integrity of systems is in place through the validation of data;
  - The use of assets and systems are controlled; and
  - The operation of authority is documented and a clear management (or audit) trail is maintained.

## **2 REVENUE BUDGETS**

- 2.1 Annual revenue budgets will be prepared by the Executive Leadership Team taking into account any general directions that may be given to them by the Board and the Council. As part of this process, each Executive Director, where appropriate, will discuss the general level of revenue funding available for the year with the Chief Financial Officer before finalising their proposals.
- 2.2 The Chief Financial Officer will present this budget to the Board for approval before 31 March in each year. The documents presented will include such summaries, statements and reports as are considered necessary to enable proper consideration of the budget.
- 2.3 A schedule of fees and charges to be levied by SCH will be approved by the Board as part of approving the revenue budget. Once approved these fees and charges cannot be amended without the approval of the SCH Board and the Council's Cabinet where appropriate.
- 2.4 No Directorate should exceed its approved budget without prior approval and should execute and manage its functions to maintain their costs within its approved budget.
- 2.5 No Officer should place an order or approve a contract without ensuring that the relevant budget holder has been consulted and there is an approved non-committed budget available.
- 2.6 Subject to the provisions of paragraph 6.7 below concerning virement, a department

may reallocate their overall budget during the year provided that no future financial commitment arises as a result and expected service standards are maintained.

- 2.7 If all or part of a budget becomes surplus to need, for whatever reason, the team should report this in the first instance to the Finance Manager via the relevant Executive Director, Head of Service or Senior Manager for onward reporting to ELT, who will determine in the first instance how such savings should be best used.
- 2.8 Where there is the potential to apply for external / grant funding, the application needs to be approved in advance by the Chief Financial Officer, ELT and where necessary the Board. Copies of all external / grant funding terms and conditions should be supplied to the Finance Team and retained for the duration that the terms and conditions apply.
- 2.9 Where an activity is to be funded by an external grant, no liability should be incurred until formal notification for the approved grant has been received.
- 2.10 No expenditure should be made, or loss of income incurred other than in accordance with these regulations except in cases of extreme urgency or where the Company is obliged to proceed. In such cases the action should be reported to ELT (and the Board where appropriate) at the first possible opportunity. It is the responsibility of the relevant Executive Director to ensure that a record of all terms and conditions associated with grant funding is maintained for the duration that the terms and conditions apply.

### **3 CAPITAL PROGRAMME BUDGETS**

- 3.1 Annual capital budgets will be prepared taking into account any general directions that may be given to them by the Board and the Council. As part of this process, each Executive Director will discuss the general level of capital funding available for the year with the Chief Financial Officer before finalising its proposals.
- 3.2 The Chief Financial Officer will present this budget to the Board for approval before 31 March in each year. The documents presented will include such summaries, statements and reports as are considered necessary to enable proper consideration of the budget.
- 3.3 The draft Capital Programme will also be presented to the appropriate approval body within the Council for approval before 31 March in each year.

### **4 LEASING**

- 4.1 No member of staff may enter into an arrangement for credit, such as a leasing agreement, without first obtaining the consent of the Chief Financial Officer in addition to obtaining the appropriate authorisation for the expenditure. Any agreements must be signed by the Chief Executive and an Executive Director.
- 4.2 The Company Secretary will keep a record of all leases and similar agreements entered into by the Company. It is the responsibility of each Executive Director to ensure that copies of leases entered into during the year are provided to the Company Secretary for this purpose.

## **5 SECURITY OF ASSETS**

- 5.1 ELT members are responsible for making adequate arrangements for the custody and control of the stocks and stores in their respective departments and for keeping such records and inventories as the Chief Financial Officer may require. They shall ensure that appropriate safeguards are established to:
- Limit access to assets, systems and records;
  - Protect personnel;
  - Establish clear control of the use of assets and custodial responsibility for them; and
  - Enable records to be reconstituted in the event of system failure.
- 5.2 Assets (not land, property, nor ICT equipment owned by the Council) and inventory items that are deemed to be surplus to the company's requirements and have a market value should be disposed of in the best interests of the company. Any disposal should have regard to the obligation to achieve best consideration, bearing in mind factors such as well-being and environmental issues.
- 5.3 Assets should be disposed of by seeking three quotations and by selecting the quotation which provides best value (i.e. highest price). Social value should be considered as part of the disposal of assets.
- 5.4 Approval to write-off assets with no market value (not land, property, nor ICT equipment owned by the Council) should be requested from the Chief Financial Officer before the write-off is actioned.

## **6 CONTROL OF EXPENDITURE**

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer will establish and maintain an appropriate and effective system of budgetary control. This will ensure that:
- All officers within directorates who are specified as budget holders (responsible for engaging staff or otherwise incurring expenditure) comply with the requirements of that system;
  - Every cost centre budget is administered by one named budget holder, determined by the appropriate Executive Director;
  - Budget holders are only responsible for expenditure which they can influence;
  - Officers entering into financial commitments ensure that they are recorded and reported using any process set down by the Chief Financial Officer as soon as the terms have been agreed in order that any decisions made are based on the most complete information available; and
  - Monthly forecasting information is provided to the Finance Team with significant variances from approved budgets being investigated on a regular basis by budget holders.
- 6.2 Members of ELT and Officers must make arrangements to ensure that effective monitoring of expenditure and income takes place throughout the year to ensure that the Company manages its operations within available funds.

- 6.3 The Chief Financial Officer will ensure that appropriate financial training is given to all new budget holders before the budget holder can commit the company to incur expenditure.
- 6.4 The Chief Financial Officer will ensure that line managers (or appropriate officers within their teams) have access to monthly variance analysis information to consider and to enable them to determine and implement appropriate actions in respect of significant variances from budgets. ELT will receive a monthly report summarising the financial position against budget for the whole company and will discuss and agree any proposed changes or remedial actions.
- 6.5 The Chief Financial Officer will periodically inform ELT (and the Board where appropriate) of the financial and economic impact of changes in policy, pay awards and other events and trends on budgets and any risks to future plans and project.
- 6.6 All Heads of Service and Senior Managers should ensure that prior approval is sought from ELT (or the Board as appropriate) before the Company is committed to expenditure for which no specific provision has been made within revenue budgets, where this cannot be managed in accordance with paragraph 2.6 above.
- 6.7 Virement is the transfer of funding allocated to one budget heading to another budget heading. Virements should be requested only where there is a genuine change in the financial plans of SCH and not used to mask minor under / overspends. The minimum virement level will be £1,000 and for the capital programme virements will only be processed once they have been approved by the relevant Cabinet Member at the Council as part of budget setting or the mid-year review. All requests to transfer funding must comply with the following basic rules:

	<b>Within a cost centre</b>	<b>Within a Directorate</b>	<b>Between Directorates</b>
Up to £50k	Budget Manager	Head of Service	Executive Directors
£50k - £100k	Head of Service	Executive Director	ELT
Over £100k	ELT & Ratified by Board	ELT & Ratified by Board	ELT & Ratified by Board

- 6.8 Transfers between Capital and Revenue are NOT allowed. Transfers to / from Ring-fenced activities must be approved by the Board. In circumstances where the Budget Manager is also the Head of Service or Executive Director approval would be required from the level above. Current examples of Ring-Fenced activities include but are not limited to:
- Private Sector Leasing
  - Syrian Families properties
  - Grant funded activity
  - Wellbeing service funded by Handyperson Grant
  - Any specific budget lines funded from Reserves (e.g. Feasibility works)
  - Budget lines relating to Service Level Agreements (e.g. Legal services)
  - Private Sector Adaptations
- 6.9 Certain technical accountancy adjustments will be exempt from the authorisation rules above. This is where:

- Responsibility for a service / activity moves from one part of the organisation to another, but the purpose of the service / activity remains the same.
- There are in-year changes in allocations to grant or funding arrangements.

These technical adjustments will be approved by the Finance Manager.

- 6.10 Line managers must ensure the accurate financial coding of expenditure and income and the correct treatment of VAT. Only codes as set out in the annual budget, and shown on the monthly monitoring reports, should be used unless approved by the Chief Financial Officer. Any expenditure for which there is no budget should be dealt with as set out in paragraphs 6.6 and 6.7 above. Advice on the correct treatment of VAT is available from the Finance Team.

## **7. FINANCIAL REPORTING**

- 7.1 The Chief Financial Officer will arrange for the preparation of monthly statements of income and expenditure against budget (taking into account any amendments to budget) and report them to the Board on a quarterly basis. In addition, statements will also be discussed at ELT meetings on a monthly basis following financial monitoring meetings.
- 7.2 In the event of a significant variance between budget and cost for a major project for which Board (or Committee) approval was obtained, the outturn and an explanation should be reported to the appropriate Committee as well as the Board.
- 7.3 The Chief Financial Officer will ensure that appropriate procedures are put in place to enable the accurate reporting of costs in respect of any specific area of operation requested by any of the Executive Directors.
- 7.4 The Chief Financial Officer will draw up the timetable for final accounts preparation and advise Officers and external auditors of the Year-End Instructions.
- 7.5 Officers will provide all information requested in the Year-End Instructions in line with the published timescales.
- 7.6 The Chief Financial Officer will ensure that the company's Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with UK-adopted International Accounting Standards and the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.
- 7.7 The Chief Financial Officer will ensure there are appropriate External Auditors appointed to carry out an independent review of the accounts and provide an audit opinion based on them.
- 7.8 The Board will approve and sign the Statement of Accounts once it is satisfied with the content of the Statement of Accounts.
- 7.9 The Company Secretary will file the appropriately authorised Statement of Accounts with Companies House in line with their published timescales.

## **8. INCOME**

- 8.1 The Chief Financial Officer will ensure that safe and efficient arrangements are in place for the receipt and issue of monies.
- 8.2 The procedures for the receipt, handling, banking and recording of cash receipts shall be in accordance with the Council's Cash Handling Instructions. This covers all sums received by staff of the Company in respect of rents, council tax and any other related payments due to either the Council or to the Company.
- 8.3 All documents used to officially acknowledge, or record amounts received, or receivable must be approved by the Chief Financial Officer. Where pre-printed, such stationery shall be ordered and controlled and subject to the same safeguards as cash.
- 8.4 Every sum of money (in whatever form) received by any authorised officer of the Company must be immediately acknowledged by the issue of an official receipt unless any special arrangements have been approved by the Chief Financial Officer. The receipt must still be recorded in the normal form, for office use only and marked accordingly even if the payee does not request one.
- 8.5 Every transfer of monies from one officer to another must be documented and signed for at the time of transfer using the agreed log.
- 8.6 All monies received must be banked in accordance with arrangements set out by the Chief Financial Officer. Banking should be daily (weekly where the weekly receipts do not exceed £250), except as otherwise agreed. All cheques, postal or money orders received in any department shall be crossed specially.
- 8.7 In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1983, when making a banking the paying-in-slip (and duplicate) must detail for every cheque the debt reference and whether it represents either full or part payment of the debt.
- 8.8 Officers should supply the Chief Financial Officer (through the Financial Operations team) with all relevant information to enable Sundry Debtor invoices to be raised in accordance with agreed procedures. In the event of queries, originating teams are expected to provide any necessary support to the Financial Operations team to enable prompt resolution.
- 8.9 All write-off of HRA rent debt should be approved by the Council's Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive and all SCH debts require approval by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 8.10 The Chief Financial Officer shall ensure that all irrecoverable sums are recorded appropriately.

## **9. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

- 9.1 All payments must be made by BACS transfer or cheque in accordance with the bank mandate in force, except where otherwise requested by the payee or otherwise ordered by the Chief Financial Officer.



- 9.2 The Chief Financial Officer may withhold payment of any sums where the requirements of Standing Orders have not been met. Payment can be held up until the requirements have been met or, for whatever reason, the requirements have been waived.
- 9.3 Invoices received should be sent in the first instance to the Financial Operations Team in accordance with instructions to be specified on the order.
- 9.4 All invoices, once approved by the relevant authorising officer, and all approved certificates for payments under contracts should be submitted to the Finance Team for payment in a timely manner to ensure that credit terms and invoice payment targets are met. Each invoice must be presented to the accounts payable team with the Purchase Order number on the original document.
- 9.5 As part of the 'Procure to Pay' process the receipting of goods and services means:
- The order was placed after following the appropriate procurement process in accordance with Rules for Contracts and in advance of the goods being received;
  - That the goods received have been examined and approved as in accordance with the specification, or the services have been satisfactorily carried out using materials of the requisite standard;
  - That prices (including all elements of the total charge) are in accordance with the contract or order;
  - That no duplicate payments have been made;
  - That all such accounts are arithmetically correct; and
  - The supplier has been requested to send the invoice directly to the 'SCHAP' Group inbox for the SCH Accounts Payable team.
- 9.6 Payments in advance of the receipt of goods and / or services should not be made unless they appear on the table below for which the Chief Financial Officer has given approval, or specific approval is sought.
- 9.7 The Chief Financial Officer will maintain a Schedule of Delegations. This shall set out the delegated levels of authority for all members of staff who have been given authority to make payments or incur liabilities on behalf of the Company. This schedule should be updated to reflect changes in staff and responsibilities as they occur and should be reviewed annually.
- Up to £1,000 approved by the relevant member of ELT
  - Above £1,000 approved by Chief Financial Officer – see table below for pre-existing approvals

Type of agreement	Approval Given
Leasing	No more than three months in advance and in accordance with leasing agreement
Private Sector Leasing Rents	No more than 12 months in advance and in accordance with rental agreement
Office Rents	No more than three months in advance and in accordance with leasing agreement
Software Licences	No more than 12 months in advance and in accordance with the relevant contract/agreement
Services provided by the Council	No more than 12 months in advance and in accordance with the SLA or with the agreement of the Chief Executive

9.8 The table below details the approved levels of delegations:

Group	Individuals	£
Chief Financial Officer	Chief Financial Officer	5,000,000
Chief Executive	Chief Executive	2,500,000
Executive Directors	ED of Operations ED of Customer Services, Transformation & Business Support	1,000,000
Heads of Service	Head of Asset Management & Development	1,000,000
	Head of Neighbourhood Services	250,000
Budget Holders	All Others (Revenue)	50,000

9.9 In addition to the scheme of delegations detailed above SCH operates the Open Contractor repair system, which has a range of delegation levels in-built to allow the repairs service to function. The delegation levels within the Open Contractor system should be reviewed annually and levels agreed by the Head of Asset Management & Development and the Chief Financial Officer. The table below details the approved levels within the system to which users must be linked. No changes should be made to this list without approval from the Head of Asset Management and the Chief Financial Officer.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Contract</b>	<b>Job Completion Value</b>	<b>Job Logging Value</b>	<b>Job Variation Value</b>
Level 1 – Executive Director of Assets & Development	All	1,000,000	1,000,000	100,000
Level 2 – Senior Managers	All	100,000	100,000	30,000
Level 3 – Operations level Manager / Senior Surveyor	All	50,000	50,000	20,000
Level 4 – Project Manager	All	15,000	15,000	10,000
Level 5 – Contract Manager / Team Leader / Clerk of Works	All	5,000	5,000	2,500
Level 6 – Admin / Scheduler	All	0	500	0
Level 6 – Admin / Scheduler	DTDDIR	0	1,000	2,500
Level 6 – Admin / Scheduler	FIREINTG	0	1,000	2,500
Level 6 – Admin / Scheduler	VOIDDIR	0	1,000	2,500
Level 6 – Admin / Scheduler	ADAPWRK	0	1,000	2,500
Level 7 – View ONLY	All	0	0	0
Level 8 – Payments Team ONLY	All	0	0	0
Level 9 – Systems Support ONLY	All	0	0	500
Level 9 – Systems Support ONLY	MECHELEX	250	0	10

## **10. VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT) AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY SCHEME (CIS)**

- 10.1 Each authorising officer and Executive Director must ensure that the correct VAT liability is attached to ALL income and that VAT recoverable on purchases complies with HM Revenue & Customs regulations.
- 10.2 Each member of ELT must ensure that where construction and maintenance works are undertaken, the contractor fulfils the necessary CIS criteria and that the Financial Operations Team is advised of their CIS status, who will then complete the validation of contractors using the on-line HM Revenue & Customs system.
- 10.3 The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for ensuring the timely submission of all appropriate returns to HM Revenue & Customs.

## **11. EXPENSE CLAIMS**

- 11.1 All expenses claimed through Oracle iExpenses must be approved electronically by the relevant budget manager. Executive Directors have the responsibility of

ensuring that employees use the appropriate method of claiming expenses depending on the expense that has been incurred. See the **Pay & Expenses** page on the Councils intranet and ensure that the employee seeks appropriate and correct approval. Where their Line Manager is not the Budget Manager, approval must be sought from the Budget Manager.

## **12. PETTY CASH AND PURCHASE CARDS**

- 12.1 The Chief Financial Officer may make advances to authorised persons to meet appropriate minor cash expenses. The amount of any individual payment should not exceed any limit prescribed by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 12.2 The provision of services by a third party should be paid for by BACS transfer or cheques and not petty cash.
- 12.3 Petty cash should not be used as “prize money” under any circumstances.
- 12.4 Petty Cash should not be transferred to another officer to use as a ‘float’. Where additional officers require a cash float a new petty cash facility should be requested and approved by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 12.5 Floats should be kept locked away for security.
- 12.6 The Float holder is required to sign a receipt in respect of each advance and will be required to account for expenditure made out of the advance on a regular basis (usually monthly). Floats will be topped up to the float level on receipt of these returns (which should include purchase receipts) in accordance with guidance issued by the Chief Financial Officer on at least a quarterly basis.
- 12.7 The Chief Financial Officer may make purchase cards available to authorised persons to enable them to meet appropriate minor purchases. The overall card limit and individual payment limits should not exceed any limit prescribed by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 12.8 The Card holder is required to sign to confirm receipt of the card and that they will abide by the conditions for use of the card. They will be required to account for expenditure made on the card on a monthly basis; this includes on-line reconciliation as well as the presentation of a summary of expenditure together with receipts for signature by the nominated authorising officer. Failure to do so may lead to the card being withdrawn.
- 12.9 Unannounced spot checks may be carried out by the Financial Operations team or Internal Audit to ensure that appropriate records of transactions are being maintained at all times and that the cash float and / or card is being held securely.
- 12.10 Line Managers and members of the Executive Leadership Team have an obligation to ensure that these rules are being complied with.

### **13. SALARIES AND PENSIONS**

- 13.1 Each Executive Director, Head of Service or their delegated managers (as regards employees in their department) shall notify the Head of Human Resources in writing of all staff changes, absences, or any other circumstances affecting the remuneration of these employees in accordance with the arrangements put in place by the Company. In signing such notifications, the officer concerned confirms the validity of the amendment and certifies that all relevant authorisations have been received.
- 13.2 The Head of Human Resources at the Council is responsible for the general control and payment of all salaries, wages and pensions and shall prescribe the procedures for the certification of timesheets and for the payment of salaries. The Head of Service is responsible for the notification of the cost code to which the salary of employees in any of their teams is to be charged.
- 13.3 Payment of salaries and wages in advance shall not normally be made without the prior approval of the Chief Financial Officer.
- 13.4 Write-off of overpayment of salaries will only occur in exceptional circumstances with the approval of the Chief Financial Officer.

### **14. TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

- 14.1 The Chief Financial Officer shall arrange the borrowings and investment of the Company in order to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the Approved Treasury Policy Statement and will work with the Council's Treasury Management Team in order to do so.
- 14.2 The Chief Financial Officer shall report periodically to the Board on the activities of the Treasury Management function where relevant.

### **15. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 15.1 The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that the Company has appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the effective management of risk. This is set out in the Risk Management Policy and Procedure, which is approved by the Board.
- 15.2 The arrangements include provision for the regular review of risks at a Board, Committee, corporate and operational level using a standard methodology as set out in the Risk Management Policy and Procedure. The Chief Financial Officer will carry out periodic checks to ensure that reviews of financial risks take place as required by the policy.
- 15.3 Reviews of any risk register are expected to give due consideration to the following;
- Identification of any new risks and how they will be managed (mitigating actions);
  - Assessment of the continuing effectiveness of mitigating actions to manage identified risks;
  - Assessment of the impact and likelihood of identified risks and any changes since the last review;

- Confirming that identified risks are still valid and if not should they be closed; and
- Consider whether any identified risks need to be escalated.

## **16. INSURANCE**

- 16.1 The Chief Financial Officer will arrange all insurances and keep appropriate records; in particular, they will arrange for Trustee Indemnity cover from a suitable supplier with reasonable terms where this is possible in the general insurance market and fidelity guarantee insurance for the due performance of the duties of any Officer charged with the receipt, custody and/or disbursement of monies and property.
- 16.2 Officers will ensure compliance of the Insurance Act 2015 and the Duty of Fair Presentation in respect of any request or alteration of insurance cover or assessment of exposure to risk for any service provision or asset during any period of insurance cover or at the request by the Chief Financial Officer upon renewal or alteration to insurance cover that may be required.
- 16.3 Officers will ensure that any disclosure of risk is made in a manner which is reasonably clear and accessible and cooperate with any reasonable request for information that may be required by the Council's/SCH Insurer(s).
- 16.4 Officers will notify the Chief Financial Officer of new risks that the organisation will be undertaking by way of new activities or service provision or any alterations affecting existing risks, potential liabilities or insurance.
- 16.5 Officers will notify the Chief Financial Officer of any new assets such as property, vehicles or other valuable items regardless of whether insurance cover is anticipated to ensure that appropriate arrangements can be assessed and put in place as determined. Asset and major risks should be notified in advance of cover being required.
- 16.6 Officers will immediately notify the Chief Financial Officer of any loss, liability or damage that may give rise to a claim against SCH or the Council, together with any information or explanation required by the Chief Financial Officer or the Council's insurers.
- 16.7 Officers will consult the Chief Financial Officer on the terms of any indemnity that SCH may be required to give to another party and will consult the Chief Financial Officer on any partnership or agreement for the provision of services that may be considered to ensure that any terms on indemnity, liability or insurance are appropriate.
- 16.8 Officers will ensure that employees, or anyone covered by the insurance arrangements do not admit liability or make any offer to pay compensation that may prejudice the assessment of liability in respect of any insurance claim.
- 16.9 Officers will ensure that employees, or anyone connected with the delivery of services covered by the insurance arrangements, do nothing that breaches the terms and conditions of these policies and would lead to the voiding of the cover.

- 16.10 Officers will fully cooperate and ensure accessibility is provided upon the reasonable request of the Chief Financial Officer or the Council's Insurer(s) regarding a service provision or assessment of an asset which may include physical surveys and / or discussion with the Insurer.
- 16.11 Officers will ensure compliance of any policy terms, conditions or warranties of any policy of insurance that may be in force including any terms or requirements following additional review or survey by the Council's Insurer(s).

## **17. AUDIT**

- 17.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Company to undertake an adequate and effective internal audit of its accounting records and control systems. This duty has been delegated to the Council's Head of Audit Services and they must report promptly any significant discrepancies that come to light (other than those caused by purely technical errors). The work of internal audit shall be based upon the principles and practices required in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).
- 17.2 The Companies Act 2006 requires the Company to submit to an annual external audit of its accounting records and control systems. The Chief Financial Officer will assist the Board in the appointment of a suitable firm of auditors qualified to carry out such work.
- 17.3 The Chief Financial Officer is required to make the necessary arrangements for the audit to be carried out and is legally obliged to give the appointed auditor every assistance in the execution and completion of their work.
- 17.4 Authorised staff of the appointed internal and external auditors are entitled without necessarily giving prior notice, to require and receive:
- Access to all assets, records, documents, correspondence and control systems, including documents of a confidential nature;
  - Access to any premises or land occupied by the Company for the purpose of the Company's business at all reasonable times;
  - The production or identification by any employee of any cash, stores, assets or other property belonging to the Company, under the employee's control; and
  - Any information and explanations considered necessary concerning any matter under consideration or investigation.
- 17.5 The Head of Audit Services will submit an annual internal audit report to the Audit & Risk Committee stating the extent of audit work carried out together with a summary of the conclusions drawn. Internal Audit will also provide the Committee with an independent assessment of the Internal Control environment in place, which will be used to support the Statement on Internal Control within the Company's annual report and accounts.
- 17.6 The Chief Financial Officer will submit the annual report and accounts to the Audit and Risk Committee for review and approval following the completion of the external audit. The external auditor will also provide the Committee with the findings from their audit together with any recommendations with regard to internal processes and

controls.

- 17.7 The approved annual report and accounts will then be tabled at the next Annual General Meeting of the Company in accordance with regulations laid down within the Companies Acts and the Memorandum & Articles of Association of the Company.

## **18. FRAUD AND CORRUPTION**

- 18.1 Responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with all officers and to fulfil this responsibility, a system of internal control must be maintained.
- 18.2 The Head of Audit Services must be informed immediately by the appropriate Head of Service or relevant officer of any disciplinary matter, any actual or suspected loss or fraud or financial irregularity, or of any circumstances which suggest the possibility of losses or irregularities or fraud, including those affecting cash, stores or other property of the Company.
- 18.3 Internal audit has a responsibility embodied in the PSIAS (as set out in 17.1) to review, appraise and report upon the extent to which the Company's assets and interests are accounted for and safeguarded from loss of all kinds arising from:
- Fraud and other offences; and
  - Waste, extravagance and inefficient administration, poor value for money or other cause.
- 18.4 Internal audit has the responsibility to investigate fraud committed by staff and fraud related offences regarding the misuse of property.
- 18.5 The Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013, Section 3 requires the Council through its Internal Audit function to investigate tenancy fraud, authorises the request for information from organisations and where appropriate prosecute.
- 18.6 In order to satisfy this, internal audit look to identify any serious weaknesses in systems of internal control which might lead to fraud. Where weaknesses are identified, tests will be carried out to establish if any fraud or irregularity has taken place. Internal audit is also responsible for making recommendations to strengthen control systems where weaknesses have been identified.
- 18.7 The Head of Audit Services is responsible for ensuring an investigation of any circumstances as outlined in 18.2 so that they can decide on the appropriate action. Where appropriate, the Head of Audit Services will inform the Police of suspected fraud or corruption and will liaise with them on the handling of any investigations.
- 18.8 The Head of Audit Services is responsible for the oversight of the Council's **Whistleblowing Policy** and for reporting any referrals to the SMBC Audit Committee. The Policy is equally applicable to SCH and all employees of SCH should raise any concerns in line with that Policy.



## **19. COMPUTER SERVICES**

- 19.1 The Council's Head of ICT is responsible for the provision and maintenance of central computer services and will ensure that any necessary procedures are put in place to protect the Company and other persons from inappropriate use or misuse of any financial or other information held on central computer files. The term "Central Computer Services" encompasses any activity carried out on computer applications, systems and associated networks used by the Company.
- 19.2 The Head of ICT will ensure that arrangements are in place:
- For the implementation of adequate controls both centrally and by users to provide for the security of applications and systems;
  - Offer advice regarding the security and operation of non-financial systems and on the Data Protection Act; and
  - Advise and support the company with the purchase and implementation of any new system / equipment.
- 19.3 Members of the ELT and Heads of Service shall maintain appropriate procedures to ensure the integrity, accuracy and security of data within their areas of responsibility at all times. The Chief Financial Officer will ensure the adequacy of controls over the financial accounting system and data feeding into it.
- 19.4 The basic requirements to protect both the computer assets and the data held on all computers of the Company are defined in the Computer Security Policy, which forms part of these Regulations.

## **20. EMPLOYMENT TERMINATION COSTS**

- 20.1 Expenditure associated with termination of employment (Redundancy, Pay in lieu of notice and compromise agreements) must be approved before any offer can be discussed and / or agreed with the employee. The relevant "Early Leaver" form should be completed and authorised by the relevant Line Manager, Head of Service and the Chief Financial Officer. The approval route is as per the table below.

Up to £100k	Chief Executive & Chief Financial Officer
Over £100k	Chief Executive & Chief Financial Officer make recommendation to HR, Equalities and Remuneration Committee

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## Solihull Community Housing



# RULES FOR CONTRACTS

## **RULES FOR CONTRACTS**

### **Introduction**

Solihull Community Housing is required to have standing orders with respect to the making of contracts. These Rules for Contracts are the standing orders that instruct Solihull Community Housing officers and members as to how to approach contracts on behalf of Solihull Community Housing. The purpose of these Rules for Contracts is to provide clear rules for the procurement of works, supplies and services for Solihull Community Housing and to ensure a system of openness, integrity and accountability, in which the probity and transparency of the procurement process will be beyond reproach. Accordingly, these Rules for Contracts must be followed for **all** contracts (but excluding the categories listed in para. 3.2) for:-

- supplies to Solihull Community Housing;
- the supply of services to Solihull Community Housing; and
- the execution of works for Solihull Community Housing.

Solihull Community Housing have a shared Procurement Strategy with the Council, setting out how they intend to go about procuring works, supplies and services. Conformity to these Rules for Contracts, and Solihull Community Housing Codes of Conduct, will ensure that contracts are let in accordance with the *Procurement Strategy*, the *Compliant Procurement Process* and associated *User Guides and Procedures*.

This document should be read in conjunction with Financial Regulations shown at section 3 of these standing orders, issued by the Chief Finance Officer. Of particular interest are the processes describing how to place purchase orders and pay invoices.

Solihull Community Housing is subject also to the United Kingdom Public Contracts Regulations 2015. This legislation requires contract letting procedures to be open, fair and transparent. These Rules for Contracts provide a basis for true and fair competition in contracts, by providing clear and auditable procedures, which, if followed, will give confidence that Solihull Community Housing has a procurement regime that is fully accountable and compliant with the legislation.

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## Definitions

In these Rules for Contracts:

**Authorising Officer** means an officer authorised to approve the placement of orders or invoices for payment

**Cabinet** means the Leader of the Council and the other members of the Council's Executive

**Cabinet Member or Cabinet** means the Member or Member body responsible for procurement decisions recommended by the Procurement Board (Constitutional responsibility for the Chief Finance Officer "Subject to the relevant Cabinet Member or Cabinet wishing to make the decision, at the conclusion of an appropriate procurement process to enter into such agreements with preferred contractors, provided that the contractual spend is within approved budgets")

**Contract** means the agreement between Solihull Community Housing and a contractor for the supply of works, supplies or services, or for any activity that generates income for Solihull Community Housing

**Contractor** means a supplier or provider of works, supplies or services to Solihull Community Housing

**Contract change note** means the document that describes changes to the original contract which have been agreed by both parties

**Contract package** means the scope for amalgamating like requirements/services currently operating at different parts of the organisation, to suit the supply market to achieve overall better value

**Contracts under seal** means contracts that are signed and sealed with the common seal of the Council giving Solihull Community Housing a statutory limitation of 12 years i.e., claims can be made for breach of contract for 12 years

**Corporate contract** means a contract or framework agreement for the supply of works, supplies or services to Solihull Community Housing or the Council

**Corporate Procurement Service** means the centralised procurement service for Solihull that includes the Council, Solihull Community Housing, The Urban Growth Company and UK Central

**Chief Finance Officer** means the most senior Finance officer who has the responsibility for the proper administration of the company's financial affairs

**CSWJETS** means Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Joint Etendering System, Solihull Community Housing etendering portal

**Decision making body** means the body responsible for decisions in the described situation under Solihull Community Housing Standing Orders

**Executive Director** means a Director within Solihull Community Housing

**ELT** means Executive Leadership Team

**Estimates** are the revenue budgets that are approved annually by the Solihull Community Housing Board

**Framework Agreement** means an agreement between Solihull Community Housing and a contractor for the provision of estimated quantities of supplies or services. This becomes a contract when an order for a specific quantity is placed either after further competition or through the most competitive source identified in the original tender

**FTS** Find a tender service

**Head of Procurement** means the most senior procurement officer or his or her authorised representative in the Corporate Procurement Service

**Light Touch regime** means the process described in the Public Contract Regulations 2015 for “certain social and other specific services including education” which tend to be of lower cross-border competition interest

**Monitoring Officer** means the company secretary

**Outcome based specifications** means a specification that describes the required outcomes through service delivery and leaves the method of delivery to the third-party provider

**Performance Specifications** means a specification that provides details of the methods to be adopted when delivering the required outcomes

**Procurement Approval Document (PAD)** means the document template used to produce the rationale for recommending a particular route to market to the Procurement Board

**Procurement Board** means the Officer Board responsible for all procurement decisions or recommendations to the Cabinet Member or Cabinet for decision when appropriate

**Public procurement legislation**, The Public Contracts Regulations 2015, UK legislation affecting public sector contracts and any amendment, re-enactment or replacement of any of them

**Quotation** means an offer to undertake a contract of £10,000 or more but less than £50,000 in value

**Right to challenge**, the community right to challenge for services under the Localism Act 2011

**SCH Board** Solihull Community Housing Board

**Section 151 Officer** means the Chief Finance Officer who has the responsibility for the proper administration of the authority's financial affairs

**Services contract** means a contract or framework agreement for the provision of services to Solihull Community Housing

**Simple contracts** means contracts signed for each party to provide a "consideration" with a statutory limitation of 6 years i.e. claims can be made for breach of contract for 6 years

**SMART** Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Based

**Social Value** means added environment, economic and social value delivered by contractors for local communities whilst providing goods, services or works for the Solihull Community Housing

**Solicitor to the Council** means the Council's most senior legal officer or his or her authorised representative

**Supplies contract** means a contract or framework agreement for the sale or hire of supplies to Solihull Community Housing and includes, where appropriate, installation of supplies

**Tender** means an offer to undertake a contract of £50,000 or more in value

**TUPE Regulations** means the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 as amended by the Collective Redundancies and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 as amended or replaced

**Works contract** means a contract for the construction, repair or maintenance of a physical asset not defined as Services in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015



<b>RULES FOR CONTRACTS</b> <b>Quick Reference Guide - Financial Thresholds</b>			
£5.0m +	Competitive tenders and compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Contracts in the form of Deeds must be sealed by the Legal Department and signed by the Chief Finance Officer.		
£5.3m +	Competitive tenders and compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 required for works, supplies and services contracts. Contracts in the form of Deeds must be sealed. Contracts under seal signed by the Chief Finance Officer.		
£663,540	Competitive tenders and compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 required for supplies and services contracts. Threshold relates to light touch regime for health and social care contracts. Contracts in the form of Deeds must be sealed. Contracts under seal signed by the Solicitor to the Council or and Authorised Signatory.		
£213,477	Competitive tenders and compliance with Public Contracts Regulations 2015 required for supplies and services (excluding light touch regime for health and social care) contracts. Contracts in the form of Deeds must be sealed. All other contracts signed by the Authorised Signatory.		
£50,000+	Competitive tenders required. Contract on standard form of contract or bespoke form of contract. Contract signed by the Authorised Signatory.		
£10,000 - £49,999	Competitive quotations required. Contract on official order form or standard form of contract. Contract signed by Authorised Signatory.		
Below £10,000	Competitive quotations advisable however not mandated. Must either use corporate contracts where one exists or show value for money. Use official order form. See guidance in section 12.3		
<b>NB: Any requirement over £10,000</b>	<b>Use a corporate contract where one exists unless there is good reason not to; and refer the requirement to Corporate Procurement Service if over £50,000</b>		
<b>NB: PCR Thresholds</b>	<b>PCR Thresholds are revised every 2 years in January. Figures quoted above for Works and Concessions is (£5,336,937) and Supplies and Services (£213,477) are applicable 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 Figures are inclusive of VAT</b>		
<b>NB: Authorised SCH Signatories</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Individuals</b>	<b>£</b>
	Chief Financial Officer	Chief Financial Officer	5,000,000
	Chief Executive	Chief Executive	2,500,000
	Executive Directors	ED of Operations ED of Customer Services, Transformation & Business Support	1,000,000
	Heads of Service	Head of Asset Management & Development  Head of Neighbourhood Services	1,000,000  250,000
	Budget Holders	All Others (Revenue)	50,000

### **Summary of Rules for Contracts - quick reference guide including approval levels.**

<b>Procurement Process</b>	<b>All expenditure over PCR 2015 threshold for (supplies/services &gt;£213,477) compliance with Public Contract Regulations 2015</b>	<b>Over £50,000 &gt; PCR 2015 threshold</b>	<b>£10,000 to £49,999</b>	<b>Below £10,000</b>
Requirement to be referred to	Procurement Board	Corporate Procurement Service	N/A	N/A
Approval	Through Estimates and compliance with Rules for Contracts, Procurement Board for approval	Executive Director approval.	Executive Director approval or delegated authority to budget holder.	Budget holder
Invitation to tender / quote	> £5.3m Public Contracts Regulations 2015 supplies, services and works contracts < £5.3m For works, minimum of 3 competitive tenders which must be advertised through CSWJETS and on Contracts Finder >£663,540k health, education and social care light touch regime >£213,477k Public Contract Regulations 2015 Supplies and services	Competitive tenders. Aim for a minimum of 3, which must be advertised through CSWJETS and Contracts Finder.	Minimum of 3 written competitive quotations, where appropriate, a minimum of 2 should be local.	Use of corporate contract or demonstrate value for money (obtaining 3 written quotations is the most effective way of demonstrating value for money. See further guidance on how to demonstrate value for money in Section 12.3)
Social Value	Social Value to be considered at the commissioning stage of the procurement. TOMs to be used with a recommended weighting of 15% to 20% in the evaluation. Exceptions to this rule must be authorised by the Procurement Board through the Procurement Approval Document (PAD)	Include Social Value Themes Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) with a weighting of 5% to 10% in the evaluation	Light touch social value with a suggested weighting of 5% in the evaluation	N/A
Opening of tenders	Electronic opening ceremony on CSWJETS	Electronic opening ceremony on CSWJETS	Electronic opening ceremony on CSWJETS when applied	N/A
Form of Contract	Standard or bespoke Form of Contract. Where contracts are in the form of Deeds they must be sealed.	Standard or bespoke Form of Contract.	Official purchase order form or Standard Form of Contract.	Official order form or Council procurement card
Contract to be endorsed /signed by	Authorised signatory. Contracts under seal to be signed by the Solicitor to the Council and Authorised Signatory	Authorised signatory	Authorised Signatory	Authorised signatory
Exceptions to the Rules for Contracts	Not available as the Public Contract Regulations 2015 dictate the procurement processes that are to be followed	Approval for exceptions to these Rules may be granted by Procurement Board or relevant Executive Director as documented in Procurement Board Terms of Reference.	Approval for exceptions to these Rules may be granted by Procurement Board or relevant Executive Director as documented in Procurement Board Terms of Reference.	No exceptions required

The Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Procurement Board, subject to conditions, may grant an exception to the Rules for Contracts. An exception cannot be granted where a breach of any relevant legislation would be incurred.

## 1. Objectives

The Rules for Contracts exist to achieve the aims set out below and to assist and protect the interests of Solihull Community Housing and individual Officers. It is important that they are viewed as ***an aid to good management***. Followed properly they provide protection for Officers against criticism and support good procurement practice. Officers must be able to demonstrate that they followed procedure or had obtained the necessary authority for not doing so, in order to:-

- ✓ *ensure value for money is obtained;*
- ✓ *ensure probity in the award of contracts;*
- ✓ *ensure fairness, equity, openness and transparency in the treatment of contractors/suppliers;*
- ✓ *ensure that procedures for placing contracts/orders comply with legislation;*
- ✓ *ensure records are kept which demonstrate compliance with Rules for Contracts.*

## 2. Scope of Rules for Contracts

All purchases and contracts made in the name of and binding Solihull Community Housing must comply with these Rules for Contracts, and also any contract that involves income to Solihull Community Housing. This includes contracts where the expenditure is grant aided by a third party. These rules also apply to a company which is an arms length organisation of the Council. Any arrangement where Solihull Community Housing pays or receives money or equivalent value, other than a contract to employ staff, must comply with these Rules. This includes contracts for:

- a) buying and selling supplies;
- b) any work being carried out;
- c) services (including financial and consultancy services);
- d) hire, rental or lease (of supplies); and
- e) concession agreements

- 2.1 To receive and deal with expressions of interest (through the Procurement Board) from relevant bodies in providing or assisting in providing a relevant service on behalf of Solihull Community Housing in accordance with Part 5, Chapter 2 of the Localism Act 2011 and to consult with the relevant Cabinet member on each expression of interest that is received.

### **3. Compliance**

- 3.1 Every contract entered into on behalf of Solihull Community Housing must comply with these Rules for Contracts and all relevant legislation.
- 3.2 The only areas excluded from these rules are:
- a) Internally recharged services;
  - b) Schemes where the Council has delegated a function to a third party to perform and where a contract makes separate provision for procurement rules;
  - c) Test purchasing in the course of an Officer's duty. (e.g. Trading Standards);
  - d) Land transactions.
- 3.3 All contracts must be in writing. Contracts under £50,000 in value must be made on an official Solihull Community Housing purchase order form or standard form of contract, as appropriate, approved by a designated Authorising Officer, with the standard terms of trading endorsed or referred to. For works contracts, one of the standard forms of contract, such as the NEC, JCT or ICC forms may be appropriate. Legal Services will advise on other suitable forms of contract.
- 3.4 Responsibility for compliance with Rules for Contracts remains at all times with Solihull Community Housing officers. The Chief Executive, Executive Directors and the Head of Procurement will be responsible for monitoring compliance against these rules, aided by internal or external audits or inspections which will be carried out as appropriate.

### **4. Justification of Need**

- 4.1 Before any purchase is made consideration must be given to:
- a) whether the expenditure is really necessary and
  - b) whether it can be met from within existing resources or whether it is being funded through grants or other approved income sources
  - c) the revenue consequences of any capital investment.
- 4.2 If the purchase is justified, then the exact requirements must be defined and an appropriate specification drawn up by the service.

## **5. The Procurement Board**

- 5.1 Composition of the Procurement Board:
- (a) Appointment and removal of Procurement Board members: from time to time in accordance with its approved terms of reference and its members must include the Chief Executive, the Chief Finance Officer and the Executive Directors.
  - (b) How the Procurement Board is to conduct itself: as determined by the Procurement Board from time to time, acting reasonably and in good faith, and in any case, lawfully.
- 5.2 The Procurement Board shall have the following powers:
- (a) To determine whether to approve or refuse any proposed procurement processes;
  - (b) To monitor compliance with contract rules and monitor spend and contracts; to achieve savings;
  - (c) To deal with expressions of interest from a relevant body exercising the right to challenge for a relevant service under Part 5, Chapter 2 of the Localism Act 2011;
  - (d) The Chief Finance Officer has the power to vary the terms of reference of the Procurement Board.
- 5.3 When reporting to the Procurement Board for tendering and contract extensions, Officers must complete the [Procurement Approval Document](#) (PAD) or [Extension Procurement Approval Document](#) template issued by the Head of Procurement.

## PROCUREMENT GOVERNANCE

### 6. Exceptions to Rules for Contracts

- 6.1 An exception to the Rules for Contracts is a permission to let a contract without complying with one or more of the Rules. An exception to Rules for Contracts may be granted subject to conditions. An exception cannot be granted where a breach of relevant legislation would be incurred.
- 6.2 Only the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Procurement Board may grant an exception to these Rules for Contracts or as detailed in the Procurement Board Terms of Reference. Applications for exceptions must be made in writing to the Procurement Board in a format agreed by Procurement Board detailing the exception that is requested and the justification for the exception.
- 6.3 The Chief Finance Officer will keep a register of all exceptions to Rules for Contracts, which shall be available by appointment for inspection by members and the public. Exceptions granted will be recorded on the Procurement Board decision log and the Exceptions register.
- 6.4 An application for an Exception to Rules for Contracts to allow a contract to be let without genuine competition will not be granted without a cogent reason. A lack of time caused by inadequate forward planning is not a cogent reason and will not permit an Exception to Rules for Contracts. If an application is granted, the Executive Director responsible for the contract must demonstrate that the price obtained is not in excess of the market price and that the contract represents best value for money.
- 6.5 An exception to Rules for Contracts **may** be granted in the following circumstances:
- a) an unforeseeable emergency involving danger to life or health or serious damage to property, in which the work, supplies or services are required more urgently than would be possible if the tender or quotation procedure were followed;
  - b) for justifiable technical reasons, the works, supplies or services can be obtained from only one supplier;
  - c) acquiring supplies or services from a different supplier would result

in incompatibility with existing supplies or service or disproportionate technical difficulties;

- d) the proposed contract is an extension to or variation of the scope of an existing contract, if permitted by the public procurement legislation i.e. below the required Public Contracts Regulations 2015 limit, *unless* the existing contract provides for an extension and the extension or variation also complies with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ;
- e) the purchase of works of art, museum artefacts, manuscripts or archive collection items;
- f) there is a need to develop and influence the market by extending the range and provision of services, provided the contract is for a fixed term of no more than three years;
- g) it is necessary to enable the continuation of a new service, development of which was initially grant-aided, provided the contract is for a fixed term of no more than three years;
- h) value for money can be achieved by the purchase of used vehicles, plant, equipment or materials;
- i) when a grant from a public body includes a recommendation as to the supplier or is time limited;
- j) in furtherance of the Council's social enterprise policy, or other economic development aims, subject to the prevailing financial support limits for this type of activity and without breaching public procurement rules;
- k) if there are exceptional circumstances in which it would not be in the best interests of Solihull Community Housing to follow the tender or quotation procedure or another Rule for Contract;

6.6 An exception to Rules for Contracts is granted and separate authorisation is not required in the following circumstances:

- placing an order with a single supplier under an existing corporate contract or framework agreement;
- placing an order against a contract/framework agreement let by another Public Buying Organisation where contracts have been let to allow collaboration, e.g. CHIC, Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation, Eastern

Shires Purchasing Organisation etc.

- Benchmarking a single quotation against published frameworks or Public Buying Organisations' catalogues for below threshold requirements.
- as part of a compliant partnering contract that contemplates a series of contracts with a single supplier;
- legislation requires Solihull Community Housing to let a contract differently from these Rules for Contracts;
- All utilities contracts will be let through the Corporate Procurement Service and in line with the procedures dictated by the Head of Procurement.

6.7 A flowchart describing the Exceptions approval process can be found [here](#)

## **7. Valuation of contracts and Aggregation of Requirements**

- 7.1 The Executive Director responsible for each contract must record an estimated value for the contract before any offers are sought.
- 7.2 The value of a contract is the total amount that Solihull Community Housing expects to pay for the contract, either in a single sum or periodically over time.
- 7.3 Contracts for the same works, supplies or services must not be split into smaller, separate contracts to avoid compliance with these Rules for Contracts or the Public Contract Regulations 2015. If it will achieve best value for money, contracts for the same or similar works, supplies or services must be aggregated into a single contract of greater value subdivided into lots if appropriate, or be let as a series of contracts based on the appropriate process for the total value.

## **8. Duties of Directors and the Head of Procurement**

- 8.1 The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that all expenditure involving procurement activity complies with the Rules for Contracts, in conjunction with the Head of Procurement. He/she is also responsible for ensuring that contracts within his/her directorate are managed and operated within the terms of the contracts themselves.
- 8.2 The Head of Procurement is responsible for maintaining an up to date



register of contracts. Contracts for less than £10,000 or one off contracts need not be recorded in the register. The contracts register is to be published on in accordance with the [Local Government Transparency Code](#)

8.3 As soon as practicable after the budget has been set and in any event before the end of March in each financial year, the Executive Director must notify the Head of Procurement of all contracts (including values) that his/her directorate plans to enter into during the following financial year. This will enable the Head of Procurement where appropriate, to publish the Council's Prior Information Notice (PIN) in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations. This has the benefit of reducing tendering timescales.

8.4 The Executive Director must use corporate contracts, where they are in place. The corporate contracts register can be found here - [Contracts register](#) To do otherwise would be unlikely to give value for money for the Council and may

be in breach of the Public Contracts Regulations. If no corporate contract is found then the compliant procurement process must be followed - [Compliant Procurement Process Step by Step Guide](#)

8.5 If there is an in-house service available that operates as a trading unit, the Executive Director must consider, in accordance with Value for Money principles, whether that service should be used or whether a contract should be let to an external provider, although all resource implications e.g. TUPE implications and/or redundancies for directly employed staff, must be considered as part of the best value assessment.

## **9. Selection of Procurement Route**

9.1 When selecting the most appropriate procurement route to secure value for money, the Executive Director, in consultation with the Head of Procurement, shall adhere to the following principles:

- (a) All practical options for contract packages and methods of procurement should be analysed and evaluated, with the object of selecting the option that most effectively ensures value for money is achieved. The preferred option must provide full, fair, transparent and open competition and be identified as the most economically

advantageous route to market.

- (b) The scope of contract packages should take into account similar themes and outcomes across services and Directorates identified by strategic, policy and service reviews. Stakeholders within and outside Solihull Community Housing should be consulted about service standards and specifications and investigation of the market undertaken. Performance under any current contract should be appraised and prospective performance considered in the light of consultations and investigations.
- (c) The contract package should seek to stimulate diversity and innovation, enhance choice for service users and attract new suppliers.
- (d) Collaboration with and partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors should be sought, which demonstrate a shared commitment to objectives that benefit users of Solihull Community Housing.

9.2 The Council has a [Compliant Procurement Process Step by Step Guide](#) that sets out minimum requirements for reporting and decision-making with regard to contracts and the key stages and actions Solihull Community Housing requires major procurements to follow, including market assessment and analysis, user consultation, risk analysis and project planning and management. The Compliant Procurement Process details how contracts should be let and minimum requirements for ongoing contract monitoring and management. Officers must comply with these processes before expenditure is committed through telephone calls, negotiations, purchase orders or contracts.

## **10. Authority to enter into a contract**

- 10.1 Officers of Solihull Community Housing have no authority in their own right to enter into any contract. They may only enter into a contract if authority is delegated to them or by specific decision of the Board, the Cabinet or a Committee or Sub-Committee.
- 10.2 Unless an officer has been given authority to enter into a contract, all

contracts involving capital expenditure must be authorised by a specific decision of the Cabinet or a Cabinet member.

- 10.3 Unless an officer has been given authority to enter into a contract, all contracts involving revenue expenditure must be authorised by a specific item in the approved revenue budget for the relevant year. A specific item in the approved revenue budget is deemed to be an authority for the relevant Executive Director to enter into a contract up to the value estimated.
- 10.4 All contracts will be let in accordance with these Rules with the involvement of the Corporate Procurement Service in consultation with service users and technical experts. For expenditure under £50k the request for quotation process should be followed and advice can be sought from the Corporate Procurement Service.

## **11. Specifications**

- 11.1 The Executive Director in conjunction with the Head of Procurement must ensure that an appropriate technical specification is prepared for every contract, which sets out clearly the Council's requirements with regard to the works, supplies or services to be provided.
- 11.2 All works, supplies and services must be specified by reference to relevant standards as appropriate.
- 11.3 Specifications should incorporate SMART performance criteria to enable the contract to be monitored and managed, and should build in a capacity for flexibility and innovation, to secure sustained improvements and the ability to meet changing local and national circumstances.
- 11.4 Where appropriate, specifications should identify and allocate the risks inherent in the contract.
- 11.5 If a contract may involve the transfer of employees (from Solihull Community Housing to a contractor or from one contractor to another), the specification should, if the contractor has assured confidentiality of personal information, include all relevant information relating to those employees.
- 11.6 The Executive Director must obtain all necessary professional and technical advice and assistance in preparing a specification, to ensure a comprehensive document that expresses the requirements and protects its

interests. Consultants or other third parties who assist in the preparation of a specification must not be invited to tender or quote for the contract and must complete adhere to declaration of interest process.

## **12 Contract procedures**

- 12.1 The Executive Director in conjunction with the Head of Procurement must establish whether the public procurement legislation applies to a proposed contract. If in doubt, the Solicitor to the Council will advise whether the legislation applies. When public procurement legislation does apply, the Executive Director/Head of Procurement must use the most relevant procedure as agreed by the Procurement Board. Whenever possible, a competitive procedure must be adopted.
- 12.2 The Head of Procurement will place all notices relating to contracts in Find a Tender Service (FTS) and Contracts Finder (CF) dependent upon threshold guidance.
- 12.3 It is strongly recommended that the Executive Director should obtain at least 3 written quotations for contracts of less than £10,000 in value, however, the Executive Director need not obtain competitive quotations but must in any event demonstrate that Solihull Community Housing is receiving value for money (see the *“Quick Reference Guide”* Table on page 8).

Where three quotations are not obtained then value for money could be demonstrated by the following:

- Using a corporate contract
- Direct award against an existing framework
- Benchmarking a single quotation against prices paid by colleagues in other departments/authorities
- Benchmarking a single quotation against published frameworks or Public Buying Organisations’ catalogues
- Ordering direct from a Public Buying Organisation catalogue
- Using a previous quotation exercise for similar goods/services within the last 3 months (checks should be made to ensure that total expenditure

doesn't exceed thresholds for higher value purchases where different procurement processes should be followed)

- Using internet price comparison sites once the quality of goods required has been established (screen shots to be saved)
- Using buyers' indices for benchmarking quoted prices

All relevant documentation demonstrating value for money will need to be retained for audit or scrutiny purposes in line with Council policy.

- 12.4 There is an additional process that needs to be followed when procuring consultants. The guidance issued by the government for off payroll working through an intermediary (IR35) needs to be considered which can be advised upon by HR.

### **13. Invitation to Formal Tender**

- 13.1 If the public procurement legislation applies to a contract, the selection of suppliers to be invited to tender for the contract must follow the requirements of that legislation.
- 13.2 If the public procurement legislation does not apply, and the estimated contract value is greater than £50,000 at least three potential contractors, who have expressed an interest against the contract notice placed on Contracts Finder, should be invited to tender. Where appropriate those invited to tender should include at least two local suppliers. The number of contractors invited to tender should ensure full competition is achieved. The placing of the contract notice should aim to achieve maximum interest amongst contractors. If less than three contractors express an interest, the decision-making body must agree to proceed, and the steps taken to try and obtain the minimum number of tenderers documented.
- 13.3 Companies expressing an interest in being invited to tender in response to a contract notice must satisfy Solihull Community Housing as to their legal, financial and technical capacity (including their health & safety and equality and diversity policies) to undertake the contract by participating in a selection process in a process approved by the Head of Procurement.
- 13.4 The Head of Procurement shall be responsible for ensuring that an "Invitation to Tender" procedure – that demonstrates public sector best practice – is

available and adhered to at all times.

#### **14. Opening Formal Tenders**

- 14.1 The information obtained at the opening of tenders is confidential to those involved in the opening process and those directly involved in evaluation of the tenders. Confidentiality must be maintained and any breach reported to the Monitoring Officer.
- 14.2 The Council uses electronic tendering (CSWJETS [www.csw-jets.co.uk](http://www.csw-jets.co.uk)). The tender opening process must be appropriate to the specific electronic software employed and its facilities for guaranteed receipt of tenders.

#### **15. The Quotation Procedure**

- 15.1 For contracts of under £50,000 in value, suppliers may be invited to quote through Contracts Finder, CSWJETS or advertised on the Council's website.
- 15.2 The Head of Service must satisfy him/herself as to the legal, financial and technical capacity of suppliers invited to quote to undertake the contract for the Council and that they will provide value for money.
- 15.3 A sufficient number of suppliers must be invited to quote to ensure genuine competition. The minimum number is three. Where appropriate those invited to quote should include at least two local suppliers.
- 15.4 The Head of Procurement shall be responsible for all procedural aspects of seeking quotations, ensuring that probity and proper public accountability standards are in operation. Monitoring shall be carried out periodically by either the internal or external auditor.

#### **16. Acceptance of Formal Tenders and Quotations**

- 16.1 Where expenditure has been approved through the budget setting process, the Procurement Board has given approval to proceed and these Rules for Contracts have been followed, the responsible officer shall review the evaluation against the award criteria and agree which tender has been successful. He/she shall not be bound to accept the lowest tender if payment is to be made by Solihull Community Housing or the highest tender if payment is to be received. The responsible officer is described in the

Summary of Rules for Contracts table on page 8 of this document.

- 16.2 Contracts over £50,000 are to be awarded under the “most economically advantageous” criterion (see para. 16.3). The Executive Director shall require a written report from the Head of Procurement requesting approval for acceptance and detailing the reasons for doing so. This shall be recorded in writing. In extreme urgency the Executive Director may agree a verbal report from the Head of Procurement, with a written report being signed off by the Executive Director within a fortnight of this meeting. All written reports will be stored in line with the [records retention schedule](#).
- 16.3 Tenders or quotations must be evaluated on the basis of which is most economically advantageous to Solihull Community Housing. The basis of evaluation must be stated in the contract notice published in the FTS and in any other public notice. The basis of evaluation must also be stated in the invitation to tender or quote. When using Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the criteria for evaluation must be set out in the invitation to tender or equivalent document depending on which procedure is used, with the weightings to be given to them. The criteria may also be set out in the FTS and public notices. Inclusion of criteria such as whole life and environmental costs and social considerations is encouraged.

## **17. Electronic tendering and quotations**

- 17.1 As of September 2018 it is mandatory for Contracting Authorities to invite and receive tenders electronically. The Head of Procurement is responsible for the procedure for these processes.
- tenders and quotations will be invited electronically, and supporting documentation uploaded through the etendering portal.
  - invitations to tender and quotes will be submitted electronically through the approved e tendering system. Electronic submissions will not be made outside of the approved system. If the etendering portal is not available when tenders are due to be submitted, the tender date will be extended until the system is available. The procedure will also include arrangements for e-auctions.

## **18. Amendments and alterations to tenders and quotations**

- 18.1 Amendments to invitation to tender or invitation to quote documents, made after the invitations have been sent out, must be sent through the etendering system to all suppliers who have been invited to tender or quote as clarifications. If there is more than one clarification, the system will number them consecutively. Clarifications should be sent out in sufficient time to allow suppliers to adjust their tenders or quotations as appropriate and no later than six days before the tender submission date for tenders over the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 thresholds.
- 18.2 A supplier's tender or quotation is its offer to Solihull Community Housing, which they may accept as it stands. Once a tender or quotation has been submitted under the Public Contract Regulation 2015, alterations will only be accepted through formal clarifications under the open and restricted procedures. When conducting negotiations under the Competitive Procedure with Negotiations, Competitive Dialogue or Innovative partnership procedures, at all stages before the final tender submission, counter offers by bidders must be made in writing through CSWJETS
- 18.3 A properly approved and -compliant Competitive procedure with Negotiation, Competitive dialogue process or Innovation Partnership will normally result in one or more Best and Final Offers as a result of negotiation with selected bidders. No alteration to the Best and Final Offer, in terms of outcomes or contract price is permitted without the specific approval of the Monitoring Officer.
- 18.4 In all other situations, if a supplier attempts to alter his offer after the last date for receipt of tenders or quotations, he must be given the opportunity to stand by or withdraw his original offer. Correction of an obvious arithmetical error, which would reduce the price to be paid by Solihull Community Housing or increase the price to be paid to Solihull Community Housing, may be accepted.
- 18.5 Where performance specifications are used, a tender or quotation that is expressed to be conditional upon acceptance of alterations to the specification or the terms and conditions of contract may be treated as non-



compliant and rejected. This does not prevent Solihull Community Housing inviting variant bids (that is an invitation to submit an alternative bid that could then be considered as being of benefit provided that the condition applying to the mandatory reference bid is followed). If variant bids are invited, suppliers must be required to submit a mandatory reference bid based on the specification and terms and conditions included in the invitation to tender or invitation to quote, so that all bids may be compared fairly.

- 18.6 Where outcome-based specifications are used it will be for the bidder to decide the method of service delivery. Tenders or quotations will be evaluated fairly against published evaluation criteria.
- 18.7 Before a tender or quotation has been accepted, the Head of Procurement may ask all tenderers or suppliers to maintain their tendered or quoted prices for a longer period. Tenders and quotations should in any event remain open for acceptance for a period of (ninety) days from the last date for receipt of tenders or quotations, or such other period as the Head of Procurement considers appropriate, and the form of tender or quotation should make this clear.

## **19. Contract extensions**

- 19.1 Where extensions to contracts have been included in the advert, tender documentation and the original contract award, the extensions may be agreed; where performance is satisfactory and the original contract terms are to continue (including price variations in line with the original contract) through the issuing of a contract change note (templates to be issued by the Head of Procurement). The contract change note must be kept with the original contract in line with the document retention policy.
- 19.2 For contracts over £50,000 if an extension is proposed where the terms and conditions of the original contract will be changed; the Executive Director shall require a written report from the Head of Procurement requesting approval for acceptance and detailing the reasons for doing so. This shall be recorded in writing. In extreme urgency the Executive Director may agree a verbal report from the Head of Procurement, with a written report being signed off by the Executive Director within a fortnight of this meeting. Once approval is received a contract change note will be issued and kept with the

original contract documentation. All written reports will be stored in line with the document retention policy. If a contract is under seal a short supplemental deed may be required and this will be dealt with on request to Legal Services.

- 19.3 Over the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 threshold, an Extension Procurement Approval Document (Extension PAD) must be taken to Procurement Board providing the business case as to why it is appropriate to extend the contract, where there have been provisions in the advert, tender documentation and subsequent contract to do so. This report must be taken to Procurement Board in a timely manner, allowing sufficient time for retendering if the Procurement Board decides not to extend the contract.

## **20. Contract variations**

Where throughout the life of the contract there are changes to the contract either requested by the contractor or Solihull Community Housing which vary the contract value by more than the PCR threshold over the life of the contract, then this must be approved by the Procurement Board before final agreement with the contractor. N.B the PCR's 2015 do not in most cases allow a material change to the contract to be more than 10% of the original contract value for service and supply contracts and 15% for works contracts or 50% in exceptional circumstances, provided that the modification does not alter the overall nature of the contract. In this instance a further tender exercise must be completed. If a contract is under seal a short supplemental deed may be required and this will be dealt with on request to Legal Services. Once approval is received from the Procurement Board or the Executive Director if under the PCR threshold a contract change note will be issued and kept with the original contract documentation. All written reports will be stored in line with the document retention policy.

## **21. Form of Contract**

- 21.1 The Solicitor to the Council will decide whether a contract over the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 threshold in value is to be executed as a deed

under the seal of the Council or under hand as a simple contract. As a general rule, works contracts, and high value contracts (over £5 million in value) will be executed as deeds under seal.

- 21.2 All contracts made as deeds must be made under the Council's Common Seal, witnessed in accordance with the relevant Standing Order of the Solihull Community Housing's Rules of Procedure (Standing Orders) by the Solicitor to the Council or such other person appointed by the Board.
- 21.3 Simple contracts over the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 threshold in value must be signed for and on behalf of Solihull Community Housing by the Executive Director whose directorate is responsible for the contract or authorised signatory in line with standing orders.
- 21.4 Simple contracts of between £10,000 and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 threshold in value must be signed for and on behalf of Solihull Community Housing by the Executive Director whose directorate is responsible for the contract or authorised signatory in line with standing orders.

## **22. Contract administration**

- 22.1 The Head of Procurement shall arrange for publication of a contract award notice, no later than 30 days after contract award, if appropriate (contracts over the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 threshold), and shall keep a register of the notified information, which shall be available for inspection by appointment by any Member of the Council, internal and external auditors and any member of the public.

## **23. Social value**

- 23.1 The Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012 requires Solihull Community Housing to consider delivering Social Value through contracts for services. Solihull Community Housing will consider social value outcomes in all contracts above the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 threshold, any exceptions to be authorised by Procurement Board through the PAD.
- 23.2. For those contracts that fall below the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 threshold, the approach should be to maximise these outcomes where possible. All contracts will include social value and any exceptions to this

must be authorised by the Head of Procurement.

- 23.3. In order to ensure that Solihull Community Housing adheres to the Act and to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the social value sought from a contract must be relevant and proportionate.
- 23.4 All expenditure must be delivered in accordance with the authority's [Social Value Policy](#)
- 23.5 The table below is an extract from the Social Value Policy which describes the social value activity that should be undertaken for different level of spend.

<b>Value</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Potential Outcomes</b>
Under £50,000	Light touch social value <a href="#">guidance</a> included on the Corporate Procurement Service intranet pages	Innovation around one or two issues such as community volunteering or linking up with a local school. This will help small local businesses understand the issues and reward those that are already involved in their communities. Expectations will not be specific to a project but take into account what the organisation does as a whole. A suggested 5% weighting to be used on project assessment
£50,000 – Public Contract Regulations (PCR) thresholds	Category Managers will guide specifications and tender documents to ensure that Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) are included within the procurement process. It is an expectation that Social Value will apply to procurement requirements that fall within this threshold and any exceptions to this rule must be authorised by the Head of Procurement.	Businesses will be expected to respond to the range of opportunities contained within the TOM matrix. They will be assessed on their project specific proposals A 5 – 10% weighting is likely to be used on evaluation
Public Contracts Regulations 2015 thresholds and above	Category Managers will guide specifications and tender documents to ensure that considerations are made at commissioning stage and that TOMs are included within the tender process, ensuring that the evaluation scores and weightings are clearly set out and that an action plan is implemented during the contract period. Social Value must be included in tenders. Any exceptions to this rule must be authorised in the Procurement Authorisation Document (PAD) presented to Procurement Board	Businesses will be expected to respond fully to the TOMs matrix and commit to project specific deliverables that will be included in KPIs. Weightings are recommended to be set at 15 – 20% Weightings above 20% are used where contract price is set, or there is a specific opportunity around Social Value to solve a specific need. Category Managers will provide guidance on what is expected although this will not be prescribed.

## **24. Prevention of fraud and corruption**

- 24.1 All purchases, contracts and income covered by these rules must be let in line with the [Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Strategy](#)
- 24.2 If an officer of Solihull Community Housing has a pecuniary interest, in a contract or proposed contract, he/she must, as required by Standing Orders, register the interest with the Chief Executive and declare it at any meeting at which the officer is present and the contract is discussed and thereafter leave the room and take no further part in the discussion.
- 24.3 If an officer has a personal or non-pecuniary interest in a contract or proposed contract, he/she must declare that interest to their Executive Director as required by the Code of Conduct for Employees.
- 24.4 If a Member of the Council has a personal interest in a contract as defined in the Members Code of Conduct, the member must take such action as is required by that Code.
- 24.5 A contract must be terminated immediately, and any losses to Solihull Community Housing arising from the termination recovered from the contractor, if the contractor, or anyone acting on his behalf
- offers or gives or agrees to give any member or officer any gift, benefit or consideration of any kind or value as an inducement or reward with regard to the contract;
  - commits any offence under the Bribery Act 2010
- A declaration to this effect must be contained in all invitations to tender or quote.
- 24.6 The attention of officers is drawn to the Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing policy, Disciplinary Rules and Procedures and the Code of Conduct for Employees. Non-compliance with these Rules for Contracts constitutes grounds for disciplinary action.
- 24.7 All of the requirements in 24.1 to 24.6 above will apply to any third party acting on the behalf of Solihull Community Housing in a contractual situation e.g. consultants and community representatives on evaluation panels

## **25. Freedom of Information Act / Environmental Information Regulations**

- 25.1 When entering into contracts, Solihull Community Housing as a public entity, and any contractor it uses, must be aware of the importance of delivering services in a transparent way. The Freedom of Information Act (the Act) and the Governments Open Data agenda promote this approach and require both the proactive publication of contractual information such as the identity of contractors and contracts, values and durations. Also the reactive publication of information following requests made under the Act or Environmental Information Regulations (EIR).
- 25.2 For this reason Solihull Community Housing will refuse to include contractual terms that restrict the disclosure of information held by Solihull Community Housing and relating to the contract beyond the restrictions permitted by the Act and EIR. This means that unless an exemption provided for under the Act is applicable in relation to any particular information, Solihull Community Housing will be obliged to disclose that information in response to a request, regardless of the terms of any contract.
- 25.3 Where, exceptionally, it is necessary to include non-disclosure provisions in a contract, Solihull Community Housing will investigate the option of agreeing with the contractor a schedule of the contract that clearly identifies information which should not be disclosed. Care will be taken when drawing up any such schedule, and be aware that any restrictions on disclosure provided for could potentially be overridden by obligations under the Act or EIR as described in the paragraph above. Any acceptance of such confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons and capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner. When entering into the above contracts Solihull Community Housing will make it clear that these restrictions apply to sub-contractors also and that the Secretary of State has the powers to designate them as 'public bodies' for the purpose of making them comply with the Act or EIR.
- 25.4 Solihull Community Housing will not agree to hold information 'in confidence' which is not in fact confidential in nature. Advice from the Lord Chancellors Department indicates that the exemption provided for only applies if information has been obtained by a public authority from another person and the disclosure of the information to the public, otherwise than under the Act

and EIR, would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that, or any other person.

25.5 It is for Solihull Community Housing to disclose information pursuant to the Act and EIR, and not the non-public authority contractor. They will take steps to protect from disclosure by the contractor information that the authority has provided to the contractor (which would clearly be exempt from disclosure under the Act or EIR) by appropriate contractual terms. In order to avoid unnecessary secrecy, any such constraints will be drawn as narrowly as possible and according to the individual circumstances of the case. Apart from such cases, Solihull Community Housing will not impose terms of secrecy on contractors.

25.6 The Head of Procurement will be responsible for advising on the application of the Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations and contracts, in conjunction with the Corporate Information Governance Manager, where circumstances arise that are not specifically covered by the policy. He/she will also be responsible for updating procedure following any case law that materially amends or augments the policy in this area.

## **26 Data Protection Legislation [Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)]**

26.1 'Privacy by Design' is a legal requirement when processing personal and/or 'special category' data ("personal data"). The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) makes it mandatory that the Council obtains contractual guarantees from all third parties that process personal data on its behalf. It also requires that Solihull Community Housing ensures third parties have measures in place to prevent unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and to prevent accidental loss, destruction or damage to any personal data they are processing on behalf of Solihull Community Housing. Where the Contractor is processing Personal Data (as defined by Data Protection legislation) on behalf of Solihull Community Housing, the Contractor shall only use the Personal Data in accordance with express instructions from and for purposes defined by Solihull Community Housing. Third parties must also be able to provide all relevant details that would



enable Solihull Community Housing to respond to Data Protection legislation requests, received from a data subject in respect of the processing of their personal data.

## **27 Management of Risk in Contracts**

Risks should be identified, assessed and managed throughout the life of the contract in line with the Risk Management Policy and Procedure [Risk Management Policy](#). Significant risks should be recorded, as appropriate, on our Corporate Risk Management system (JCAD Core).

## **28 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults**

When spending public money, officers have a duty under the Care Act 2014 to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. CPS's standard Invitation to Tender ([ITT Part 3](#)) includes appropriate questions in section 4.11 and the Safeguarding Framework to be asked of bidders when it is possible that the service provider may come into contact with children or vulnerable adults. This template is typically used for expenditure over £50k, however officers must satisfy themselves that they have duly considered safeguarding issues when awarding contracts or placing orders under that value and that where necessary, DBS checks have been put in place by the contractor/provider. Further support and information can be accessed through the [Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board](#) and the [Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

## **29 Impact of other legislation on contracts and quotations**

In addition to what has already been mentioned in these Rules, there is other legislation that may impact on the supplies, services or works required when following a contract or quotation procedure e.g. health and safety, modern slavery etc. the Corporate Procurement Service will be able to give you advice on the impact of this legislation and the considerations you will need when drawing up specifications or identifying appropriate suppliers/providers. The authority produces an annual [Modern Slavery statement](#) which describes how this issue is being tackled by Solihull.

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**WHY DO WE HAVE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS?**

- To protect all officers when it comes to financial control and governance
- To ensure that officers know their financial responsibilities and to make them part of their daily work
- To demonstrate our commitment to sound financial management so we use our resources effectively to help our decision making
- Give assurance to external audit
- Internal Audit use them to ensure controls are operating effectively

Why do they matter to me?

- They provide rules for and apply to EVERY OFFICER and BOARD MEMBER and must be complied with.
- They provide a clear basis on how to practice effective financial management to provide good audit trails
- Any non compliance may result in disciplinary action and dismissal

**REVENUE BUDGETS**

The Budget is produced annually by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) with input from Budget Holders and approved by the Board along with the review of fees & charges to be levied.

No changes should be made to fees & charges without Board approval.

No Officer should place an order or approve a contract without ensuring that there is an approved non-committed budget available.

**CAPITAL BUDGETS**

SCH Manages the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme on behalf of the Council. The programme is mainly made up of spend relating to the council housing stock on:

- Major Maintenance & Improvements (eg Sprinklers)
- Stock Growth & Development (eg New Build & Acquisitions)
- Housing System / ICT Developments

It is important to maintain accurate costing for the Capital Programme as SCH are reimbursed 100% of spend by the Council.

The Budget is produced annually by ELT and Recommended by the Board for approval by the Council's Cabinet.

No Officer should place an order or approve a contract without ensuring that there is an approved non-committed budget available.

**FINANCIAL REPORTING**

Budget Holders are responsible for monthly monitoring and forecasting for all key areas of revenue and capital expenditure.

Budget holders are responsible for highlighting variances and identifying mitigating actions that can be made to improve the financial position.

Financial position of the company reported to ELT monthly and to the Board quarterly.

The preparation of the year-end Statement of Accounts (SoA) is a statutory function that SCH must produce and publish each year.

There are strict deadlines for the production of the SoA that SCH must adhere to and this document is subject to external audit, review by Audit & Risk Committee and signed off by the Board.

**EXTERNAL / GRANT FUNDING**

SCH often has the opportunity to apply for external / grants to support projects, either as SCH or on behalf of the Council.

Obtaining this funding can include a lengthy application process and the funding may come with terms and conditions (T&Cs). Applications should be approved in advance by the CFO, the ELT and where necessary the Board.

Copies of T&Cs should be supplied to the Finance Team and retained by the applying officer for the duration that they apply.

No costs should be incurred until formal notification that the grant has been approved has been received.

**VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT)**

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is responsible for ensuring SCH submits quarterly VAT returns. This is a statutory function and we must reclaim VAT where possible with VAT receipts / invoices as evidence.

VAT coding by all officers is vital to prevent errors as errors can open SCH to possible financial penalties.

**TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

The CFO arranges all borrowings and investments on behalf of SCH.

**INTERNAL CONTROLS**

You have a duty to ensure there is an effective system of governance which incorporates appropriate internal controls.

**EXPENSE CLAIMS**

Claims via iExpenses must be approved by the relevant budget manager.

Executive Directors have the responsibility of ensuring employees use the appropriate method of claiming.

## Summary of SCH Key Financial Regulations

### LEASING

Appropriate approval must be obtained from the Chief Financial Officer BEFORE entering into ANY leases.

Due to accounting standards leases must be detailed in SCH's company accounts and there are certain items of information that should be requested PRIOR to agreeing a lease. Please speak to the Finance Team for full details.

ALL agreements must be signed by the Chief Executive and an Executive Director.

### CONTROL OF EXPENDITURE

CFO establishes and maintains the financial system and Budget Holders must comply with that system.

Spend should not be incurred where there is no budget available.

Transfer (ie Virement) of budgets are allowed within specific parameters.

### PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

All goods and services ordered by authorised officers must be for SCH Business ONLY.

All goods and services should come from an approved supplier or contractor and procured in line with the Rules for Contract.

An order should be raised in advance of receiving the goods and receipted in line with the 'Procure to Pay' Process.

Payments in advance should not be made unless they are in line with paragraph 9.6 of the Fin Regs.

No Officer should approve orders above their authorised limit.

## Appendix D

### PETTY CASH

Petty cash should only be used for minor expenditure and not to be used for 'Prize Money', payments to 3rd parties for services.

Petty Cash should not be transferred to another officer without the approval of the CFO.

You should reconcile and replenish your float at least quarterly.

All Cash must be locked away to safeguard against loss or theft.

### PURCHASE CARDS

The CFO may make purchase cards available to authorised persons to enable them to meet appropriate minor expenses.

The overall limit and individual payment limit should not be exceeded.

The card holder must comply with all conditions for the use of the card.

Line Managers and ELT have an obligation to ensure that these rules are complied with.

Do not use your purchase card where corporate contracts exist for suppliers and other means of payment can be used (ie I-proc) nor allow your card to be used by anyone else

### INCOME

All sources of income should be acknowledged by official receipt.

Income should be banked daily where it is more than £250 and weekly if less.

Write off of Debts relating to rent must be approved by the Council's Director of Resources.

Write off of SCH Debts must be approved by the CFO.

### SECURITY OF ASSETS

You have a responsibility for the security of assets under your control.

You are expected to exercise due economy and efficiency in the use of company resources, in the execution of approved plans and the running of services.

You must make arrangements for the custody and control of stocks and stores.

Stock assets that are surplus to requirement must be disposed of in the best interest of the SCH (social or environmental).

### COMPUTER SYSTEMS

All staff must ensure that data / records on computer systems are accurate.

New systems for payments, including those linked to Oracle, must be approved and align with the normal scheme of delegations.

All new computer systems must be requested via the Digital Transformation Board.

All computer systems must have access controls and delegations regularly reviewed for accuracy.

### CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY SCHEME (CIS)

Where construction and maintenance works are undertaken it is essential that each officer understands their obligation with regards to identifying the CIS status of contractors.

The CFO is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate deductions are made and returns submitted to HM Revenue & Customs.

### SALARIES & PENSIONS

Executive Directors, Heads of Service or their delegated managers must notify the Head of HR in writing of all staff changes, absences or other circumstances affecting pay.

Payment of salaries and wages in advance requires CFO approval.

Write off of overpayment of salaries will only occur in exceptional circumstances and requires CFO approval.

### INSURANCE

The CFO is responsible for arranging insurance on behalf of SCH.

Officers will notify the CFO of new risks as they arise.

Officers will notify the CFO of any new assets such as property, vehicles or other valuables regardless of whether insurance cover is anticipated.

Officers will inform the CFO of losses immediately.

### EMPLOYMENT TERMINATION COSTS

All expenditure must be approved BEFORE any offer can be made to an employee.

Approval for costs up to £100k should be received from the Chief Executive AND CFO.

Approval for costs above £100k should be received from HR, Equalities and Remuneration Committee following a recommendation by the Chief Executive AND CFO.

### RISK MANAGEMENT

The CEO is responsible for ensuring SCH has appropriate arrangements in place to effectively manage risk. This is set out in the Risk Management Policy and Procedure which is approved by the Board.

The CFO will carry out periodic checks to ensure that the review of financial risks takes place as required.

Everyone has a duty to identify and manage risks in a balanced, structured and cost effective way to enable SCH to achieve its outcomes.

Find further information in the [Risk Management Policy](#)

### FRAUD

All Managers and officers must ensure that a system of internal control is maintained to reduce the risk of fraud and corruption.

Any suspected or detected fraud, theft or loss must be reported to the Head of Audit Services immediately.

All Officers should aware of the [Whistleblowing Policy](#) as a route to highlight concerns

### AUDIT

The Council's Head of Audit Services has delegates responsibility for undertaking internal audits on behalf of SCH.

SCH are subject to an annual external audit of its accounts. We are legally obliged to give the external auditor every assistance in the execution of their works and as such all officers may be required to provide evidence and / or support to enable this audit to be completed.

Authorised staff of the appointed internal and external auditors are entitled to request support / evidence with an audit without giving advance notice.

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## SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

FULL BOARD MEETING: 22 May 2023

### REPORT OF THE HEALTH, SAFETY & RISK SERVICE SMBC

#### Health and Safety Quarterly Report January - March 2023 (Quarter 4)

##### 1. Purpose of Report / Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide SCH Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Board with an update on legislative changes and guidance, corporate health and safety activity, any areas of specific concern and recommendations for improvement.
- 1.2. The SCH Board, Chief Executive and ELT have overall accountability and responsibility for ensuring the effective management of health and safety within SCH. The success of the Health and Safety Management System in place relies on the commitment, engagement and support from all levels of managers and employees in the organisation.
- 1.3. The SMBC Health, Safety & Risk Service (HSRS) role is to provide health and safety competent assistance, advice and guidance to help the SCH Leadership Team to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.

##### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Board is recommended to:
  - (i) **NOTE** the contents of this report.
  - (ii) **NOTE Appendix 1** - Legislative update
  - (iii) **NOTE Appendix 2** - Accident/Incident Reporting Analysis Q4 2022/23.

##### 3. Regulatory Interventions

- 3.1. There were no Health and Safety Executive (HSE) visits made to SCH at the time of writing this report or any regulatory interventions this quarter.

##### 4. Legislative / Guidance Updates

- 4.1. A legislative update has been provided in Appendix 1.

## **5. Building Safety Compliance**

- 5.1. A number of health and safety working groups and committees are in place to oversee building safety compliance in SCH. This includes the Building and Resident Safety Group and Capital Project Board (Officers) and the Building Safety Task and Finish Group (Board Members). SMBC also have a separate Building Safety Assurance Board in place which is led by the Director of Economy and Infrastructure who fulfils the role of Principal Accountable Person under the Building Safety Act (on behalf of the Council as the overall accountable body).
- 5.2. The Head of Building Safety in SCH produces a regular building safety composite report to provide an update on compliance actions and adherence to the Building Safety Act (including secondary legislation being introduced). A separate Building Safety Implementation Plan is also in place.

## **6. Health, Safety & Risk Service - SMBC**

- 6.1. The SMBC Health, Safety and Risk Service continue to provide professional health and safety support to SCH. The two principal contacts are Mark Wills, Health, Safety and Risk Manager, and from March 2023; Dan Dalton, Senior Health and Safety Advisor (who replaces Jane Carter who takes retirement at the end of May 2023).
- 6.2. Below is a summary of support provided during this reporting period:
  - New rules governing the disposal of waste that may contain persistent organic pollutants (POPs) has presented challenges to SCH. Large bulky items, such as sofa's can no longer be broken up into smaller, manageable sized sections to make their disposal easier and safer from a manual handling perspective, due to the risks of environmental contamination from POPs. Advice has been provided to SCH including evaluating if removing bulky items, either fly tipped or as part of the bulky waste collection service should continue, due to the health and safety risks posed from manually handling these large items, without any mechanical means.
  - Actions from the newly created health and safety improvement plan for Occupational Health and Safety, have been inputted onto Assure, the online health and safety management system. This will enable progress reports to be provided at both the Occupational Health and Safety Group and Safety Leadership meetings and facilitate tracking actions to completion for each manager.



- The SCH Lone Working and Personal Safety Policy has now been finalised and support was provided through attendance at a recent 'Stay Connected' session to communicate the roll out of the policy.
- Support is being provided to a newly created sub-group of the Occupational Health and Safety Group, focusing on the use of lone working alarms issued to staff and the associated procedures for their use and activation response.
- Support has been provided to the engagement team covering the health and safety arrangements and risk assessment for the volunteer tenant building safety advocates (BSA) for the high-rise blocks. This follows an incident where one BSA was physically assaulted whilst performing their role.
- Assistance has been provided to the Responsive Repairs team relating to the investigation of a serious RIDDOR reportable accident involving a fall from height whilst replacing fascia on a garage block. A number of actions have been highlighted that will help to prevent a recurrence, when fully implemented.
- A number of face-to-face drop-in sessions have been undertaken at both SCH office locations to further help and advise staff on all matters relating to health and safety, including how to use the on-line Evotix Assure system.
- Providing ongoing support for audited areas, including Saxon Court, to help managers to complete their audit actions.
- General support and advice to some service areas within SCH to improve their health and safety arrangements and risk assessments.
- Attending and contributing to the:
  - Monthly Building and Resident Safety and Capital Projects Board meetings.
  - Quarterly Occupational Health and Safety meetings.
- Overseeing the recording of incidents, the quality of incident investigations and production of incident data.
- Attending the West Midlands Social Housing Health and Safety Group meetings and providing feedback on key learning points.

- Providing professional health and safety advice on draft policies produced by SCH.
- Ongoing support and advice on various health and safety work-related related topics and input into revised governance arrangements.

## **7. Occupational Health and Safety Management Audits**

- 7.1. A revised audit process was presented to ELT and agreed earlier this year. This will begin in June/July 2023. The audit process will be supportive to assist managers to help them to identify gaps in their current management of health and safety. A specific audit timetable of service areas to be covered will be agreed with ELT by the end of May 2023.
- 7.2. A number of site inspections of Community Halls, managed by SCH, have been undertaken. Reports providing clear recommendations and actions to improve health and safety arrangements have been provided to the Business Support Manager. The monitoring of recommendations will be overseen by the Occupational Health and Safety Group.

## **8. Escalation process**

- 8.1. Issues and concerns raised from the relevant health and safety groups have a formal escalation process to the Safety Leadership group.

## **9. Accident/Incident Reporting Analysis Q4 2022/23**

- 9.1. The generic term **incidents** include all accidents, abuse, near misses, fire and any other health and safety related incident reported on the online system, Assure.
- 9.2. This quarter saw **a reduction** in the overall number of **incidents** reported, 30, compared to 41 reported in last quarter. The decrease appears to be due to a reduction in the amount of tenant related incidents reported onto the online system Assure.
- 9.3. Out of the 12 reported incidents involving staff and agency workers, there were:
  - 7 accidents (including one RIDDOR reportable major injury involving a fall from height)
  - 4 abusive incidents
  - one near miss.

9.4. All tenant **incidents** reported to SCH are recorded on the online system. This can mean that not all incidents reported involve a fault or were as a result of SCH's work activities. Complex incidents often need investigating to establish the root cause or to determine if the incident occurred at all. Further information is included in the accompanying appendices.

9.5. There were 18 tenant reported incidents this quarter. This included:

- 15 accidents, 2 abusive incident and 1 near miss.
- Out of the total of 18 incidents reported this quarter, 9 incidents potentially involved a fault, including 8 accidents (including 2 RIDDOR reportable incidents where the injured tenant was taken directly to hospital) and 1 abusive/violent behaviour incident.
- 9 of the tenant incidents reported do not appear to involve a fault, these include 7 accidents, one near miss, and a dog attack.

A full break down of incidents is attached in Appendix 2.

## **10. Equality and Diversity Implications**

10.1. Equality and diversity are routinely considered by SCH when dealing with health and safety issues, for example when inspecting communal areas so that corridors and pathways are clear to ensure safety for people with mobility issues.

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## **Appendix 1 – Health and Safety Legislative / Guidance Updates**

### **1. Principle Accountable Person**

- 1.1. As the implementation phase of the Building Safety Act continues, further guidance has made it clear that where an in-scope building has more than one accountable person, the accountable person responsible for the structure and exterior of the building will be the 'Principal Accountable Person'.
- 1.2. However, when buildings have a single accountable person, that entity or person will become the principal accountable person by default. Where the Council is the owner and registered provider, it is recommended that the description of 'principal' accountable person is now used. This was recently demonstrated through the building safety registration testing that SCH have been doing. The various building safety related policies and reports produced across the Council and SCH should now use this terminology.

### **2. Building Safety 'Be Ready' Campaign**

- 2.1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has now launched the first phase of the building safety campaign and the new website: [Building Safety 'Be Ready' Campaign](#). The campaign aims to help and encourage everyone affected by changes to building safety law to be ready – understand what is coming and how to prepare, step up – take ownership and manage risks and act now – comply with new law.
- 2.2. The campaign's first focus is on being ready for high-rise building registration, the first operational function of the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) to come into force under the Building Safety Act 2022. This will need to be completed by the Principal Accountable Person between April 2023 and October 2023. The registration process is a crucial stage in setting up the new building safety regime and registering buildings in scope will be a legal requirement.
- 2.3. After registration, the Principal Accountable Person for a high-rise residential building will need to apply for a Building Assessment Certificate at the direction

of the BSR. It is likely an email from BSR will be sent to SMBC requesting this information.

### **3. Building Safety High Rise Registration and Certification**

- 3.1. The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) opened a consultation on 30th January 2023 on the information document that highlights the necessary competency for those managing high-risk buildings (HRBs). This includes a summary of the recent British Standard, publicly available PAS 8673:2022 Built environment – Competence requirements for the management of safety in residential buildings – Specification. This consultation closed on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
- 3.2. The consultation is following the introduction of new standards launched last year designed to improve competency in building safety. The key areas of competency are operating environment, leadership and teamwork, building systems and safety, operational practices, risk management and planning, monitoring and control.

### **4. Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022**

- 4.1. The regulations came into force on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023, implementing previously communicated recommendations from phase one of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The regulations made it a legal requirement for responsible persons for all multi-occupied residential buildings in England with storeys over 11 metres in height to:
- undertake quarterly checks of all fire doors (including self-closing devices) in the common parts
  - undertake – on a best endeavour basis – annual checks of all flat entrance doors (including self-closing devices) that lead onto a building's common parts
- 4.2. The HSE have explained a 'best endeavour approach' as responsible persons determining the best approach to engage with residents to gain access to undertake the annual checks of flat entrance doors. This could include the responsible person agreeing with residents a date so access can be granted. The reason for a 'best endeavour' approach is that residents cannot be

instructed, allocated responsibilities and managed in the same way that an employee can be.

- 4.3. The regulations also require responsible persons to provide to residents of all multi-occupied residential buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises (that have common parts) information on the importance of fire doors to a building's fire safety. The responsible person must also remind all residents of this information at periods not exceeding 12 months.
- 4.4. In addition to the guidance released in December 2022 regarding the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, guidance was released in January 2023 on how to conduct checks on fire doors: [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022 - Fire Door Guidance](#). This guidance covers what the law requires providing information for residents and information for responsible persons.
- 4.5. The guidance also distinguishes the different requirements for fire doors in communal areas and entry fire doors to individual flats and categorises fire doors into four main categories:
- flat entrance doors
  - doors to stairways and lobbies (between corridors and stairways)
  - doors that sub-divide corridors
  - doors to plant rooms and cupboards (for example containing electrical distribution equipment) and to service risers (shafts which allow the vertical passage of cables, pipes)
- 4.6. The guidance states that residents must be given the following information:
- fire doors should be kept shut when not in use
  - residents or their guests should not tamper with self-closing devices
  - residents should report any fault or damage immediately to the responsible person

4.7. The following checklist has also been provided which should be used in conjunction with the guidance: [Fire Door Checklist](#):

**Appendix: fire doors checklist**

Location			Checks completed									Comments – Issues identified; actions taken etc
Floor	Door	Door type	Door, frame, and securing wall	Letterbox	Glazing	Hinges, locks and other ironmongery	Door gaps	Strips and seals	Self-closer	Alterations	Any other damage	

## 5. Industry Benchmark Standards for Fire Risk Assessors

5.1. The Fire Sector Federation (FSF) has produced an Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) establishing a benchmark standard for fire risk assessors based upon the principles of fire risk assessment: [Fire Sector Federation ACoP](#)

5.2. The standard is the result of the Fire Risk Assessors Working Group with the purpose of defining levels of competency required for those carrying out fire risk assessments whilst taking into account the complexity and risk profile of the premises. The standard considers the activity of the profession on three distinct risk levels, namely:

- Foundation – fire risk assessments within low-risk premises
- Intermediate – the general requirement for fire risk assessments within medium risk premises
- Advanced – conducting fire risk assessments within high-risk premises

5.3. The standard applies across four interrelated benchmark values and attributes:

- Professional Knowledge
- Principal Skills
- Principal Experience
- Professional Behaviour



- 5.4. This Standard will be relevant for those who hold legal duties and have obligations and responsibilities for fire safety to understand the competency required by those carrying out fire risk assessments.
- 5.5. The ACoP notes that accredited third party certification (ATPC) is judged essential for fire risk assessors, particularly those working on high risk buildings, either as an individual or company. This may be the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) or registration of the fire risk assessor by a Professional Engineering Institution (PEI) that is licensed by the Engineering Council (EngC).
- 5.6. With regards to qualifications, the ACoP states that fire risk assessors who carry out fire risk assessments to high risk buildings (HRBs) will generally be required to be qualified to level 5 or above, certified by an approved educational or professional institution.

## **6. HSE Launches 'Asbestos and You' Campaign**

- 6.1. In March 2023, the HSE launched a new campaign to remind people working in construction trades to manage the risks associated with asbestos. Despite it being banned in the building industry since 1999, figures show that 5,000 people a year still die from asbestos-related diseases due to asbestos remaining in millions of homes and buildings.
- 6.2. Those carrying out repairs or refurbishment work are at a higher risk of disturbing asbestos, especially when working in houses. Builders, carpenters, electricians, joiners, plasterers, plumbers and roofers are just some of the trades being urged to take the risks of asbestos seriously. The campaign particularly wants to reach those who started their careers from the year 2000, after the use of asbestos was banned, so they know the risk remains.

## **7. Social Housing (Regulation) Bill – Training Standards**

- 7.1. Changes made through the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill will mean that social housing managers will be required to have an appropriate level housing management qualification. This will need to be equivalent to a Level 4 or 5

Certificate or Diploma in Housing, or a foundation degree from the Chartered Institute of Housing.

- 7.2. The changes made will be through amendments to the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill which will improve standards in the sector and hold landlords to account over the service they provide to their tenants.

## **8. Regulator of Social Housing – Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard**

- 8.1. In March 2023 the Regulator published details of tenant satisfaction measures. Registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in managing their homes and neighbourhoods.

## **9. Home Standard Duty – Breaches**

- 9.1. The Regulator of Social Housing has found two district councils in breach of the Home Standard over hundreds of overdue health and safety checks. More than 150 of Babergh District Council's homes and more than 250 of Mid Suffolk District Council's homes did not have a current electrical condition report. The Regulator found that there was the potential for serious detriment to tenants.
- 9.2. Babergh District and Mid Suffolk District are two separate council organisations, however they both operate with the same workforce. Babergh District Council made a self-referral to the regulator in November 2022. Over 70% of re-inspection asbestos surveys were overdue and more than 150 properties had not received a gas safety inspection within the statutory timeframe.

## **10. The Gas Safety (Management) (Amendment) Regulations 2023**

- 10.1. New laws related to the transmission and distribution of gas in Great Britain came into force in April 2023 following a government review of gas quality regulation and a public consultation on changes to the Gas Safety (Management) Regulations 1996.
- 10.2. Changes will see new values for the content and characteristics of gas that may be conveyed in the gas network, an extension of the co-operation duties to liquified natural gas import facilities, the creation of an Emergency Reporting

Service to take over the functions and responsibilities of the gas emergency telephone service for gas escapes and additional regulatory requirements for pipelines conveying biomethane in gas networks.

10.3. The Gas Safety (Management) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (GSMAR) apply to gas transmission and distribution, providing for the safe management of gas flow through a network; gas quality specifications; arrangements for dealing with gas escapes and arrangements for managing gas supply emergencies, and will play an important role in the continued supply of gas and resilience in our supply mix, and in the health and safety of gas conveyance.

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# **Incident/Accident/Near Miss Reporting Statistics**

**Quarter 4 2022/23  
January – March 2023**

**The following statistics include:**

- Work related incidents to employees, agency staff and others.
- Resident safety - Incidents reported by residents.

## Introduction

An incident is considered to be 'work-related' if any of the following played a significant role;

- the way the work was carried out;
- any machinery, plant, substances or equipment used for the work or
- the condition of the site or premises where the incident occurred.

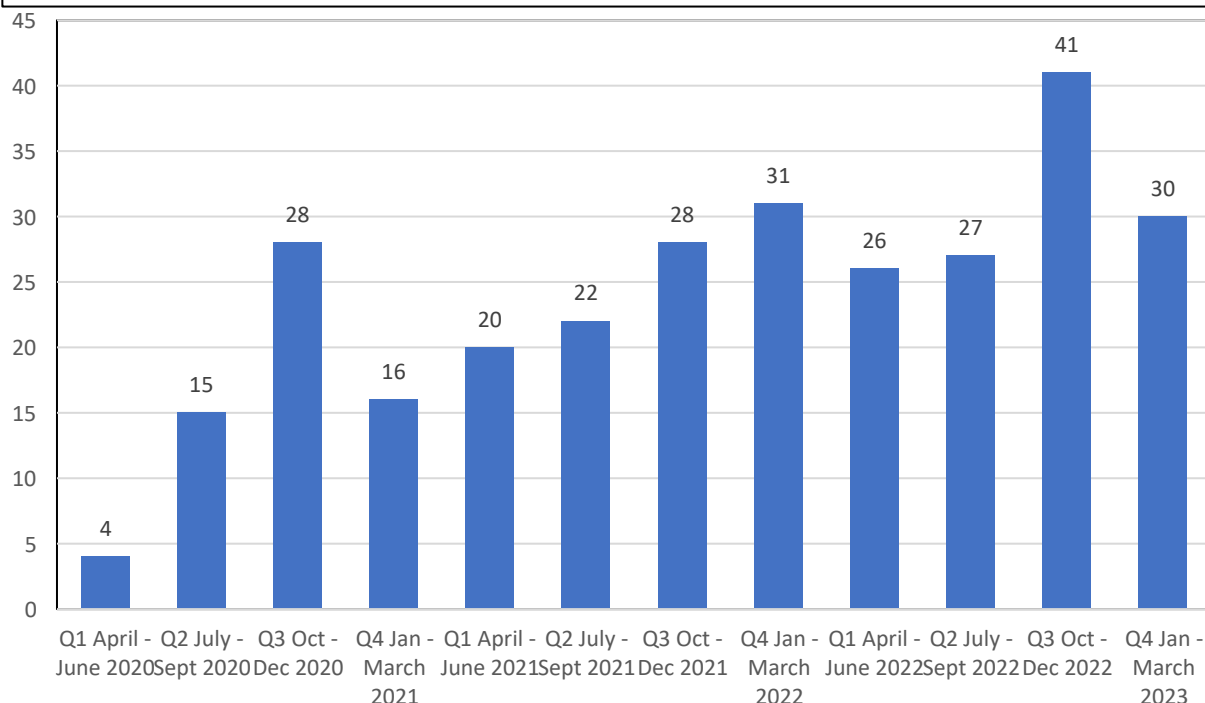
Certain types of incident are reportable to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the **Reporting of injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR)**.

Incidents is a collective term and are categorised into 6 categories, see table below:

Type of Incident Recorded	Definition of Incident
<b>Accidents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any unplanned event that results in injury or ill health to employees and tenants, where SCH has responsibility for cause of accident.</li></ul>
<b>Near Miss Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness or damage but had the potential to do so whether or not as a result of compensating action.</li></ul>
<b>Violent / Abusive / Behavioural Incidents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any incident in which a person is abused or threatened either physically, verbally or in writing or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.</li><li>• Any incident involving the behaviour of an adult or customer in a social housing or care setting where an employee is injured.</li></ul>
<b>Diagnosed Occupational Diseases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specified Diagnosed Occupational Diseases (Reportable under RIDDOR) contracted directly through work related activities.</li></ul>
<b>Fire or Property Related Incidents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any fire or property related incidents including security, vandalism, collapse or failure of building structure or equipment damage.</li><li>• The exposure of hazardous substances / materials under COSHH (The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations) including asbestos or legionella.</li></ul>
<b>Environmental Incidents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any incident which solely impacts on the environment. This includes discharge, drainage or damage to flora or fauna and spillages.</li></ul>

# Total number of Incidents Reported by Quarter

**Total Number of Incidents Per Quarter (Staff and Residents)**



## **Headlines Q4 2022/23:**

- There was a total of 30 incidents reported this quarter. This appears due to a reduction in the amount of incidents reported by tenants.
  - 12 incidents involved employees, agency staff and others
    - 7 were accidents - including one RIDDOR reportable major injury involving a fall from height
    - 4 were Abuse/Threat/Violent Incidents
    - Only 1 near miss was reported
  - 18 incidents were reported by tenants, 14 were accidents, 2 were abusive incidents and there was one near miss
    - 8 accidents and one abusive/violent behaviour incident potentially involved a fault (including 2 RIDDOR reportable incidents where the injured tenant was taken to hospital)
    - 9 of the tenant incidents reported do not appear to involve a fault, including 7 accidents, one near miss, and a dog attack.



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# Occupational Health and Safety

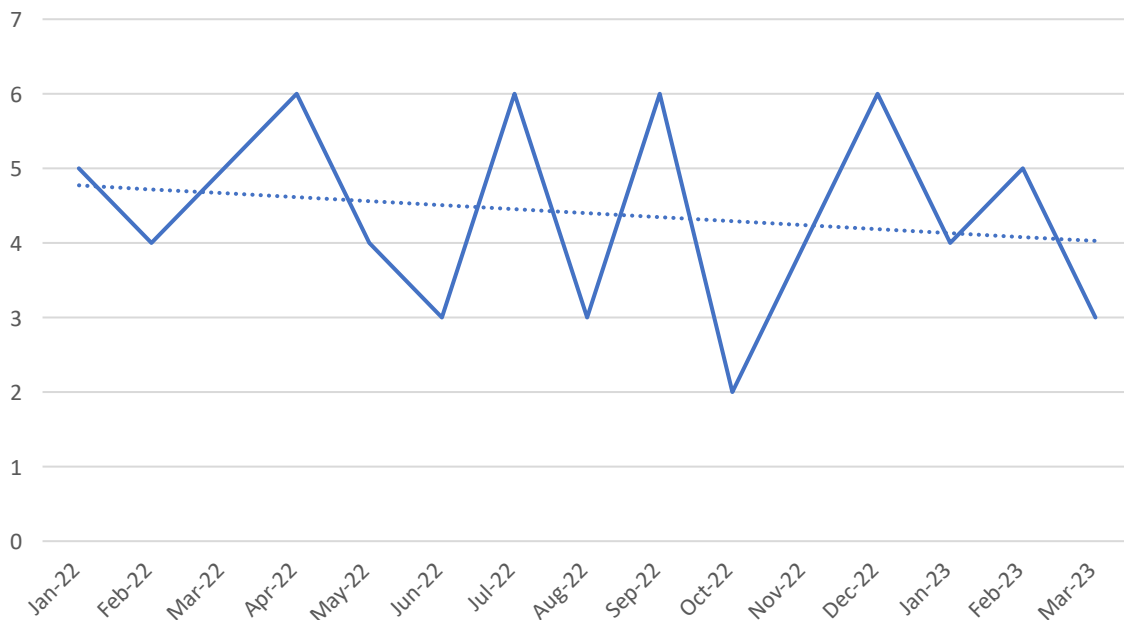
**Incident Statistics for Employees, Agency Staff and  
Others**

**Quarter 4  
January – March 2023**



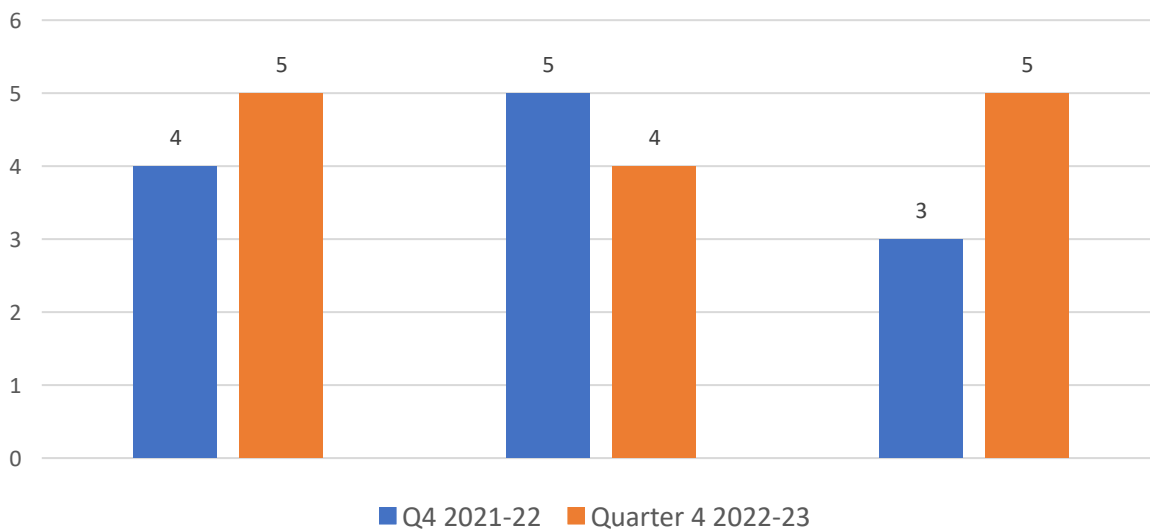
# Rolling Total of Incidents

Rolling Total Employee, Agency Staff and Other Incidents



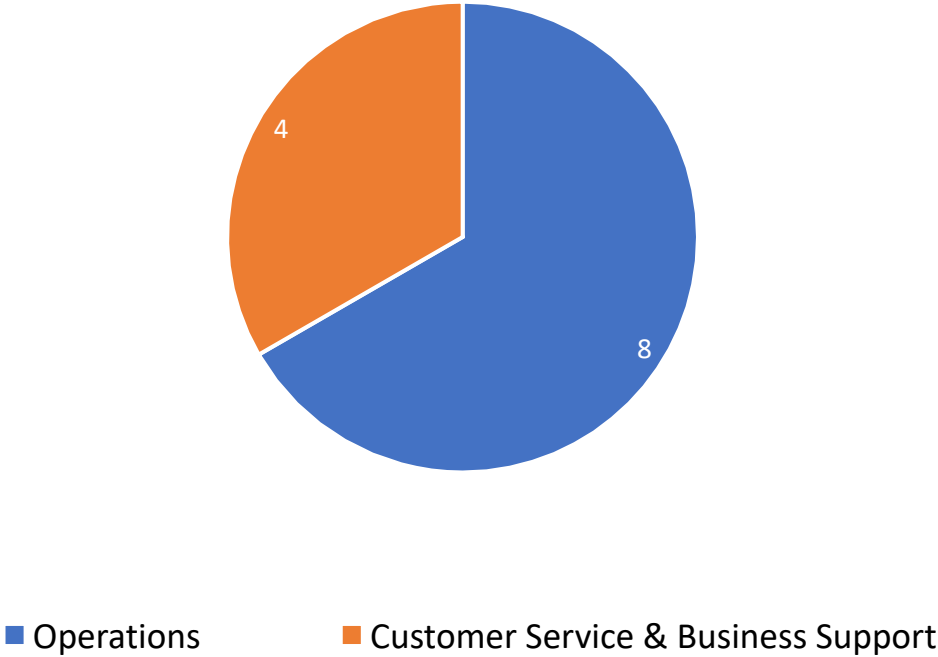
- The graph above shows employee, agency staff and other incidents over a 12 month rolling period, with the addition of a trend line, showing an upward trend.
- The graph below compares this quarter with Q4 2021/2022

Quarter Comparison Q4 January - March for Staff, Agency and Other Incidents

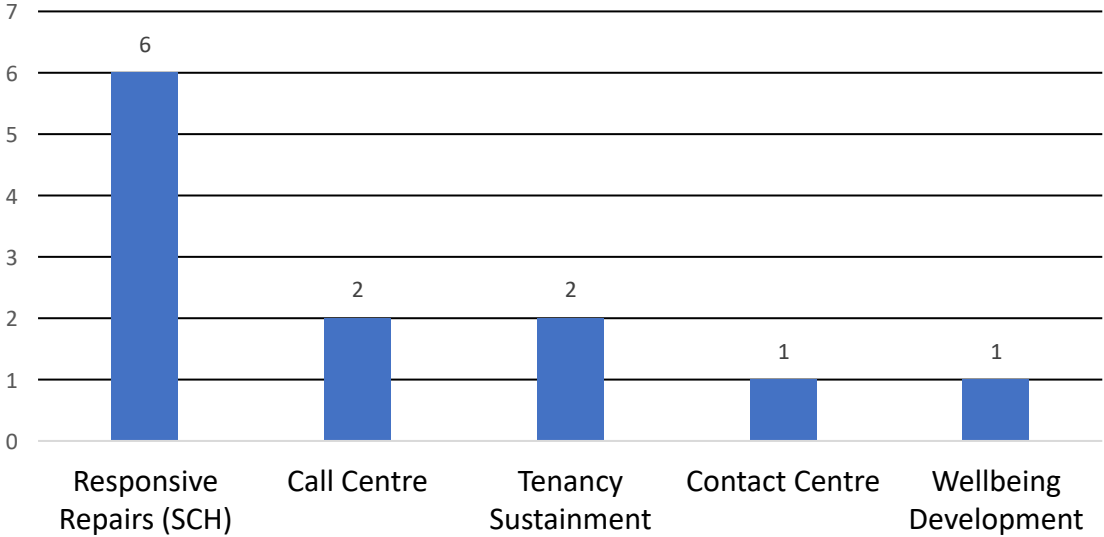


# Employee/Agency and Other Incidents

Number of Incidents Per Directorate



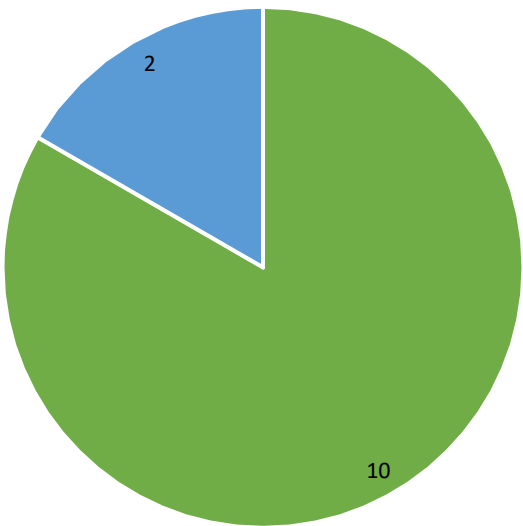
Q4 2022 Breakdown per Area



The above charts shows a breakdown of employee, agency staff and other incidents by Directorate/Service Area/Team this Quarter. A total of 12.

# Person Involved and Type of Incident

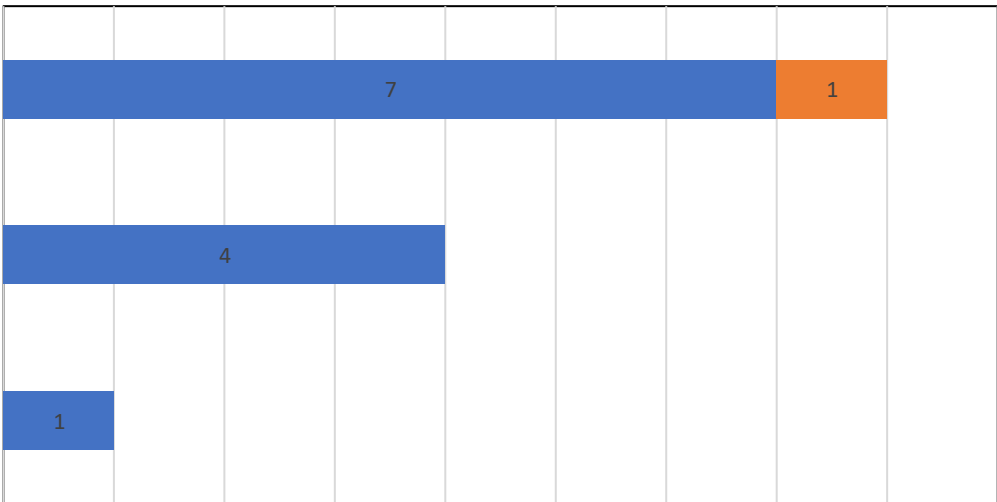
Incidents per Person Involved



■ Employee   ■ Agency employee

There were 12 incidents - 7 accidents (1 RIDDOR) 1 near miss and 4 reports of abuse to employees and agency staff.

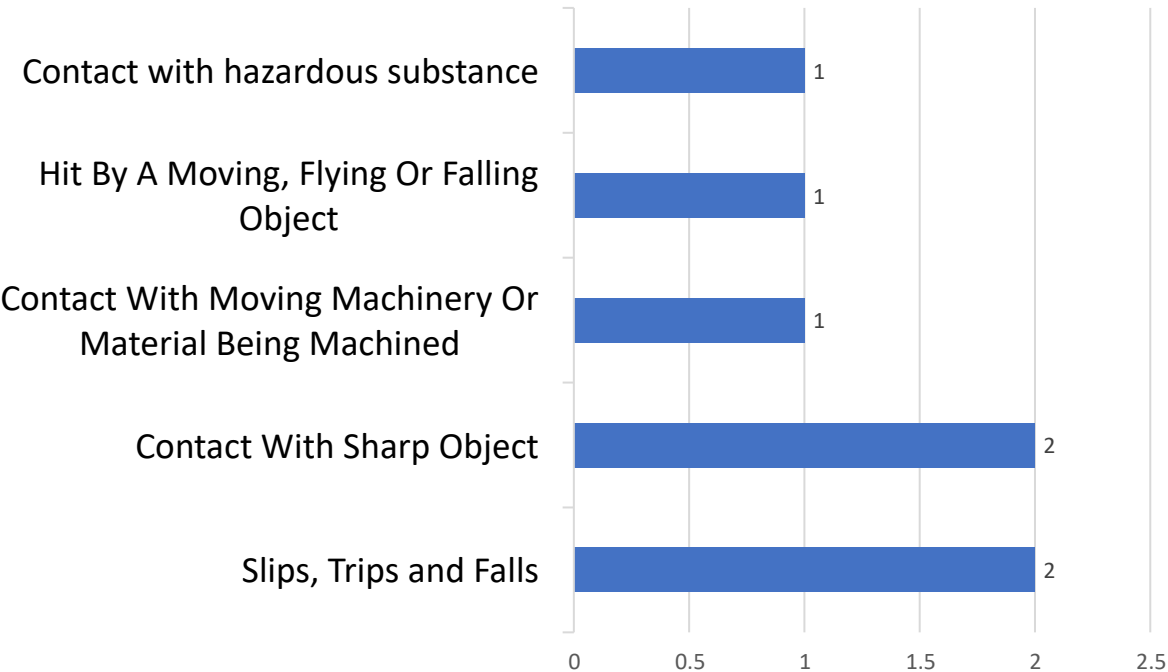
Incident Type



	Near Miss	Abuse/Threat/Violent incident/Assault	Accident
■ Q4 2022/23	1	4	7
■ RIDDOR			1

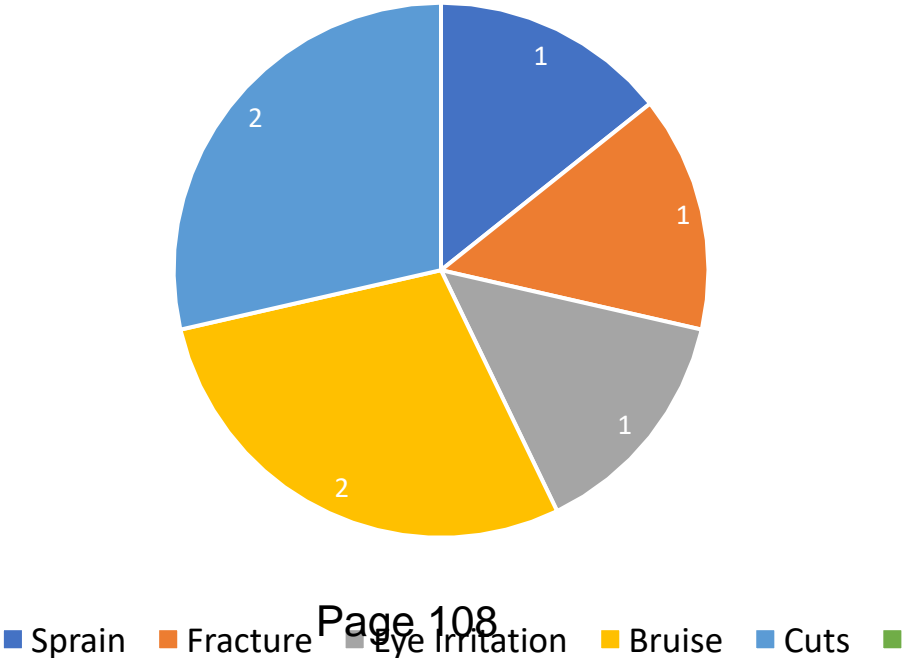
# Employee/Agency/Other Accident and Injury Breakdown

Employee, Agency and Other Breakdown



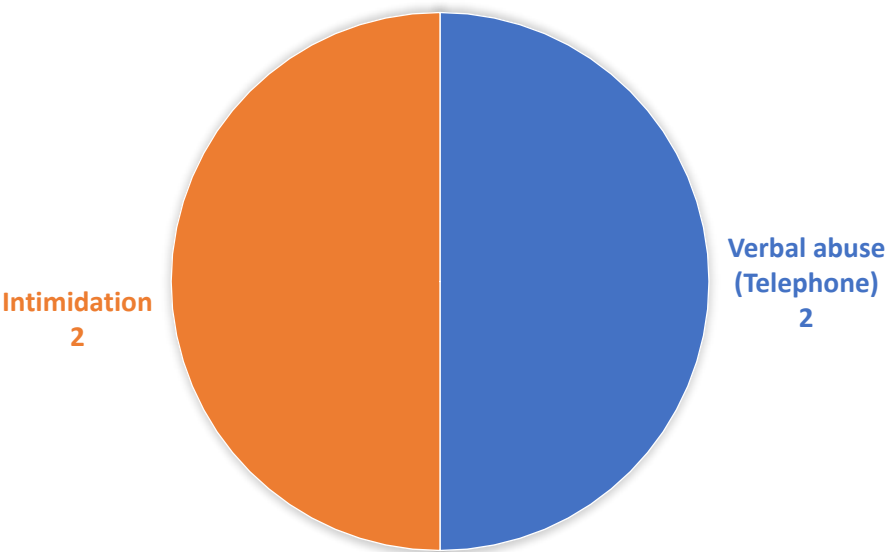
- The above chart shows a breakdown of employee, and agency staff accidents (a total of 7).
- The chart below shows these broken down by injury type.

Injury Type - Accidents

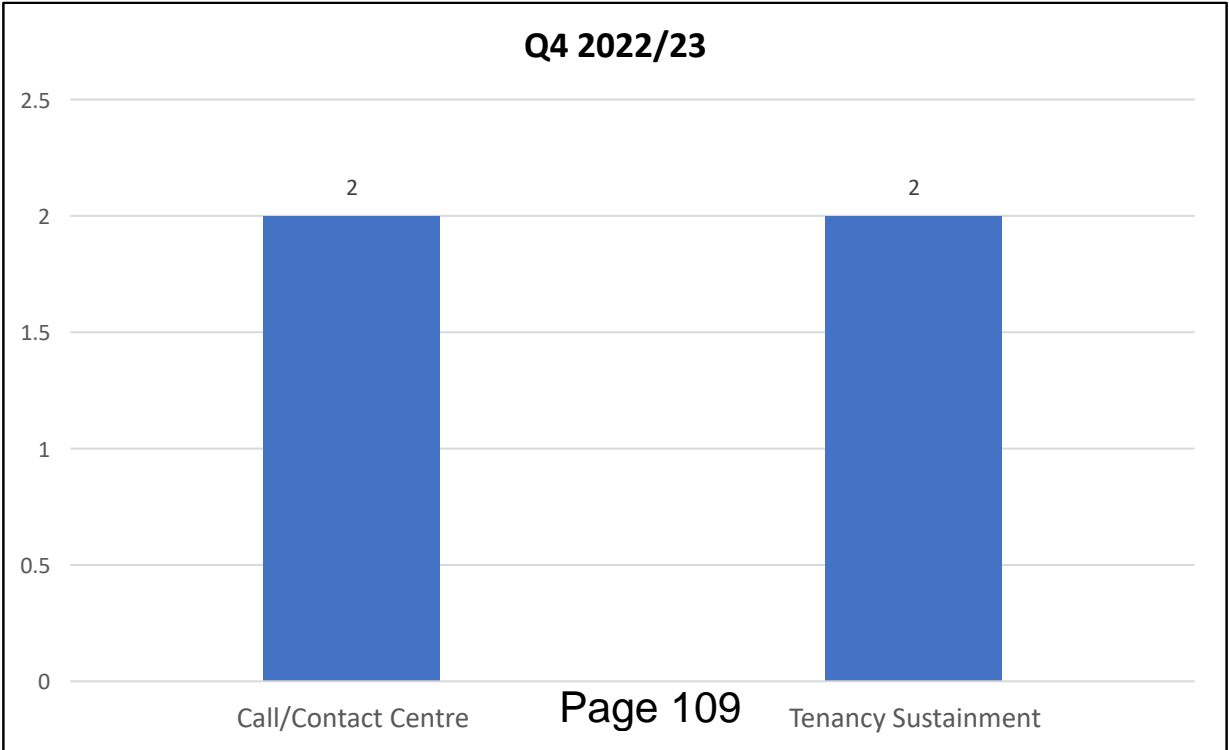


# Employee/agency and Other Abuse/Threat/Violent Incident Breakdown

Abuse/Threat/Violent Incident Breakdown



- The above chart shows a breakdown of abuse/threat/violent incidents (a total of 3).
- The chart below shows these broken down by Area.



## Employee, Agency Staff and Other Summary

### **Near Miss Reports**

There was 1 reported near miss this quarter.

Managers need to encourage staff to report more near misses to help prevent accidents by removing a potential cause before it can lead to an accident.

### **Abusive Incidents**

There were 4 reported incidents of violence and abusive behaviour this quarter to staff.

### **Accidents**

There were 7 accidents this quarter.

### **RIDDOR Reportable**

There was a major injury RIDDOR reportable accident this quarter involving a fall from height whilst carrying fascia replacement work on a garage block.



**Solihull**  
Community Housing  
Shaping our neighbourhoods

# Building and Resident Safety

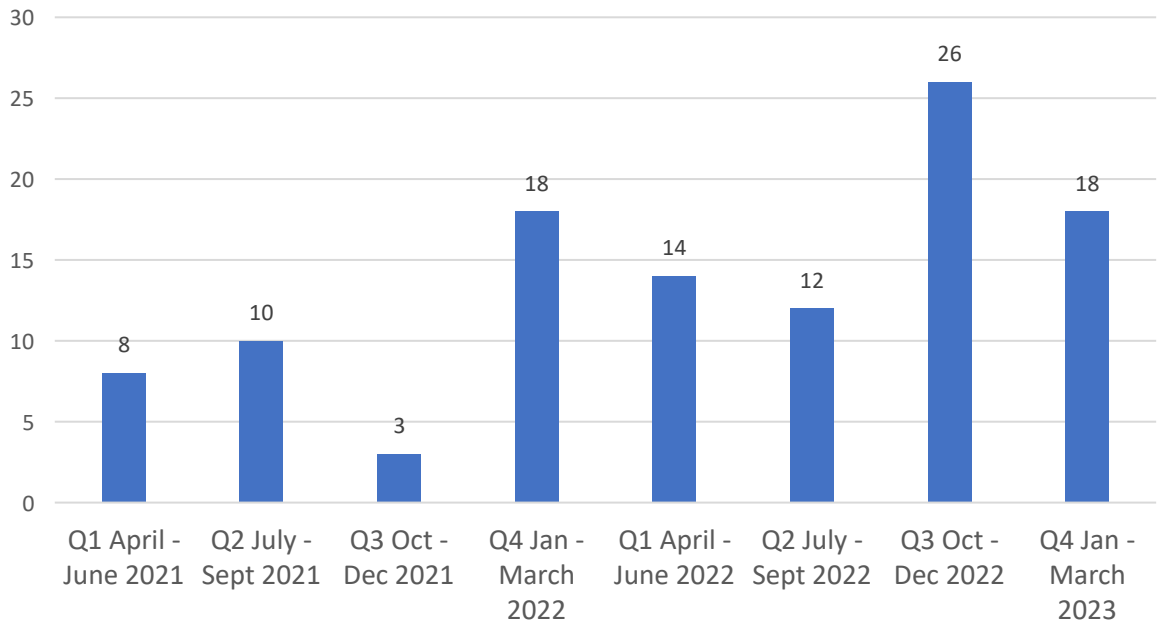
## **Incident Statistics Quarter 4 January – March 2023**

This section details all incidents and near misses involving tenants. Details are provided for all tenant reported incidents.

The data identifies incidents where a property defect or circumstance was the contributory factor to an injury or near miss and this was the landlords (SCH) responsibility to resolve and also if the incident was work-related in some way.

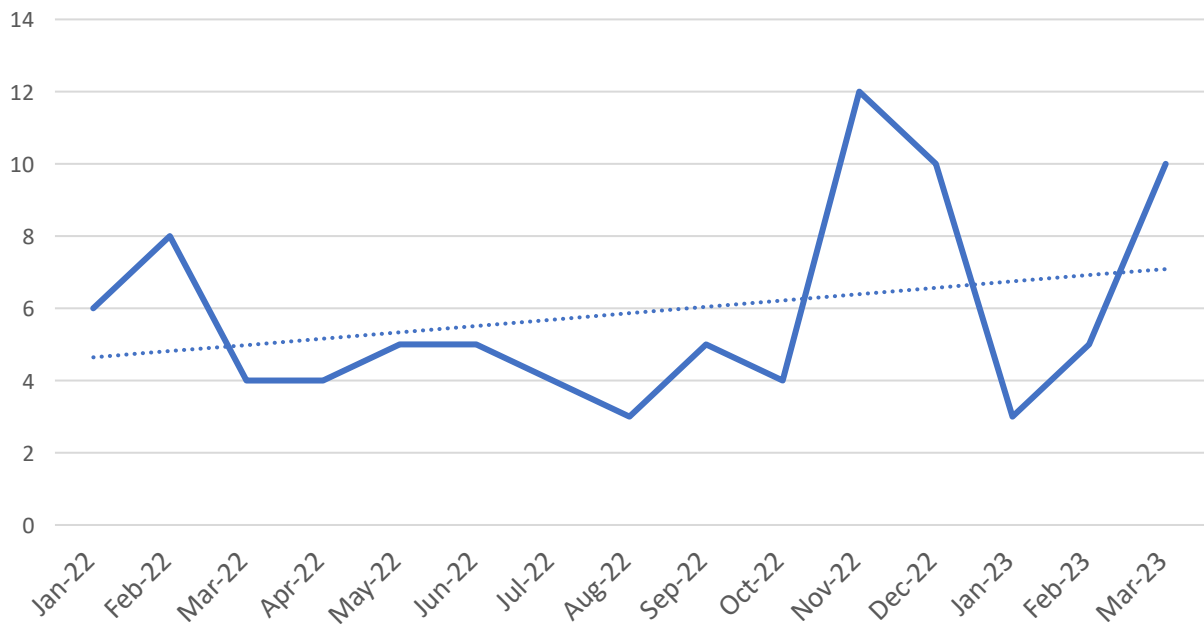
# Resident Safety - Tenant Incidents

Resident Incidents Per Quarter



- Resident incidents reported per quarter.
- The graph below shows the rolling monthly totals of resident reported incidents with addition of trend line.

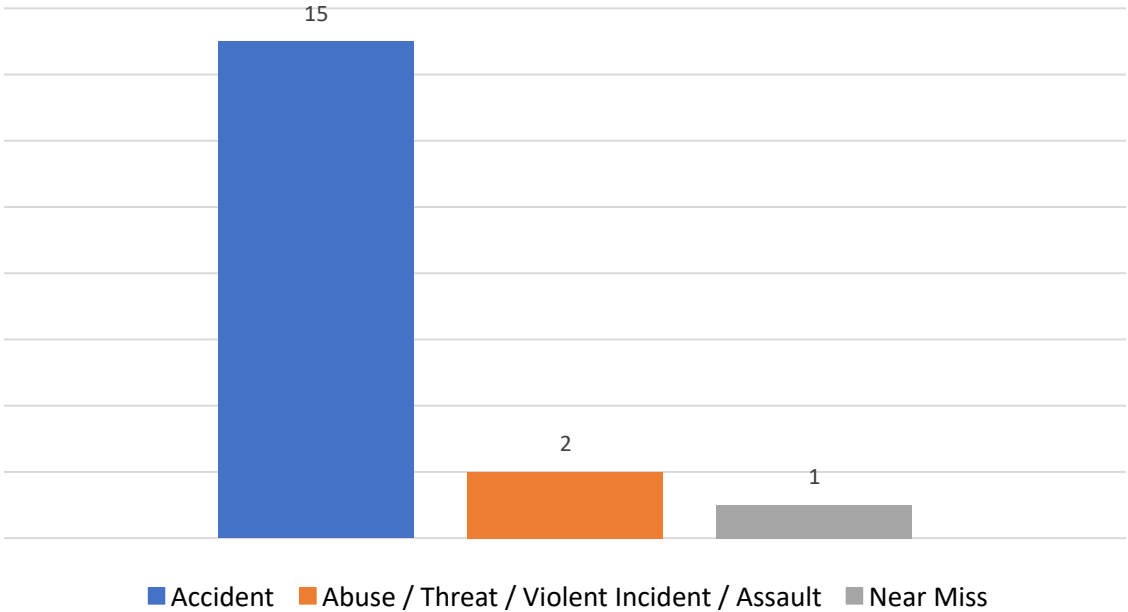
Rolling Monthly Total Resident Incidents Reported





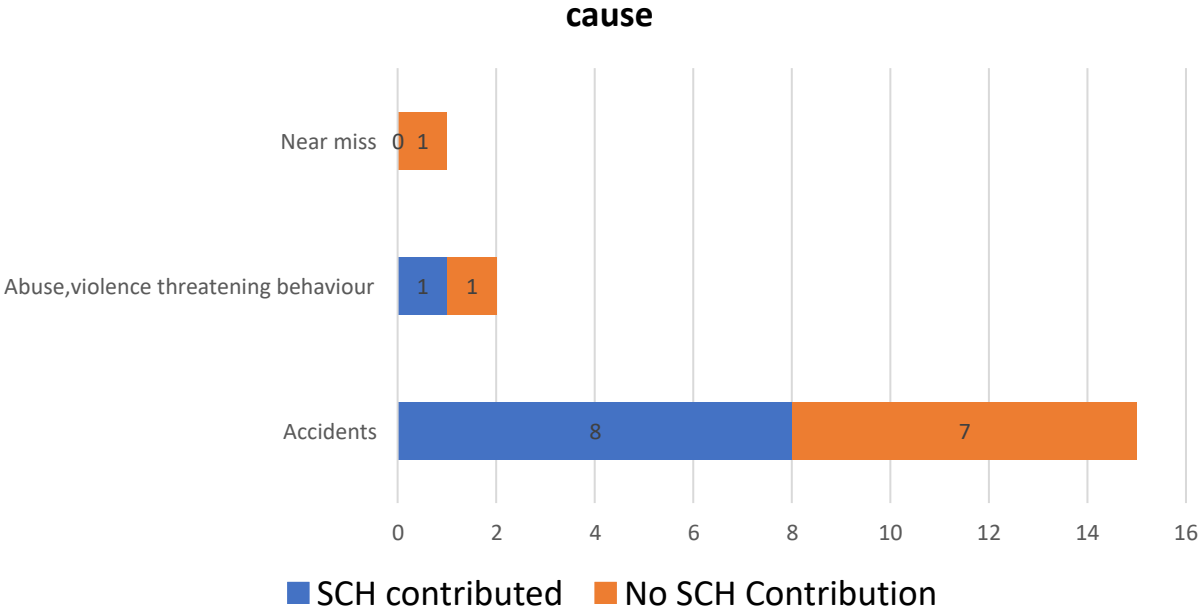
# Resident Safety - Tenant Incidents

Resident Incident Breakdown By Type



- There were 18 resident safety incidents this quarter.
- There were 2 RIDDOR reportable accidents this quarter.
- The graph below shows if the incident was caused in part by SCH activity.

Resident Incidents where SCH may have contributed to their cause



# Resident Safety - Tenant Incidents

Resident Accidents by Type

Fell On The Same Level

Slips, Trips and Falls

Accidental during play

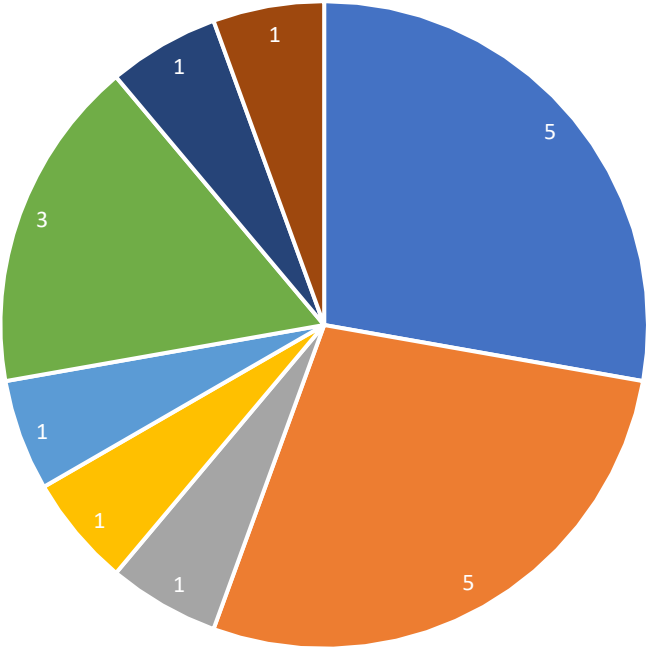
Animal Dog attack

Entrapment

Contact with electricity

Moving vehicle

Intimidation



The graph above shows the accident cause, the majority being falls.

## Resident Safety Summary Notes

### **Incidents where SCH activity may have contributed to their cause**

Out of the 18 tenant incidents reported in Quarter 4 2022/23, 8 accidents and one abusive/violent behaviour incident potentially involved a fault, or issue caused by SCH activity (including 2 RIDDOR reportable incidents where the injured tenant was taken to hospital).

### **Near Miss Reports**

- There was one near miss incident reported during Quarter 4 2022/23 involving a car and this was not the fault of SCH.
- Near miss reporting is to be encouraged to help prevent accidents by removing a potential cause before it can cause an accident.

### **Abusive Incidents**

- There were 2 reported incidents of violence and abusive behaviour towards tenants, one involved a Building Safety Advocate and the other was a savage dog attack on a person visiting a tenant.

### **Tenant Accidents**

Most tenant accidents this Quarter 4 2022/23 continue to involve a slip, trip or fall of some description. There were 9 slips and falls. Not all were as a result of a defect. The most common causes are health conditions, uneven slabs and wet floors.

### **RIDDOR Reportable**

There were 2 RIDDOR reportable incidents this quarter involving the son of a tenant who was playing football and sustained an injury from a protruding bolt from a fence. The injury required hospital treatment. The other involved a tenant falling off the tail lift of an SCH vehicle after he had gone to assist an SCH employee to remove bulky waste.

### **Fire or Property Related Incidents**

A separate Fire Log continues to be used by SCH to log fire incidents. Assure has now been configured to enable more information on high rise block incidents to be captured.

### **Other incidents reported where SCH did not play a part in their cause (by work-related activity)**

Nine of the tenant incidents reported do not appear to involve a fault, or issue caused by SCH activity, including 7 accidents, one dog attack, and a dog attack, where the injured person required plastic surgery.

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**SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING  
BOARD MEETING: 22 MAY 2023  
REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

**2023/24 BUDGET HORIZON**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the SCH Board on the SCH 2023/24 Budget, consider actions and contributions to the Budget Strategy Reserve.

**2. Recommendation – Items for Noting and Approving**

- 2.1 The Board is requested to:

- (i) **NOTE** the SCH current additional financial pressures for 2023/24.
- (ii) **NOTE** the actions in progress to address the financial pressures.
- (iii) **CONSIDER** any further actions required to address the budget pressure.
- (iv) **APPROVE** the transfer of £1.750m to the Budget Strategy Reserve where £0.250m is transferred from the earmarked staffing restructures and £1.500m is transferred from the SCH General Reserve.
- (v) **APPROVE** the use of the Budget Strategy Reserve to fund the additional costs of the 2023/24 pay award and employer's pension contributions.

**3. SCH 2023/24 Budget Background**

- 3.1 The 2023/24 HRA rent report considered by Cabinet on 9 February 2023 included a model based on a 5% rent increase with a comparison for a 7% rent increase. After careful consideration, the decision to approve a 5% rent increase was approved. Cabinet also approved the rolling 5-year SCH Management Agreement at a cost of £22.146m, an increase of £2.414m or 12.23% when compared to 2022/23.
- 3.2 The SCH Board agreed the 2023/24 budget on 8 November 2022 based on a 5% rent increase subject to the February Cabinet decision on rent increase. As there was no change to the 5% proposal, the budget remained unchanged with some late amendments to Wellbeing service

charges and use of £102,000 reserves for an additional resource to address damp and mould agreed on 20 February 2023.

3.3 The budget agreed took into account the following pressures:

- The 2022/23 backdated pay award and allowed for 3.5% pay award in 2023/24;
- Inflationary increases to utilities to take account of 2022/23 price increases and assumed increases in 2023/24 of 37.0% for electric and 180.0% for gas;
- Contractual inflation assumed CPI as 5.08%;
- The additional cost of biomass heating should be offset by increased chargeable rates agreed as part of the 2023/24 annual fees and charges;
- The increased service charges for 2023/24 take into account the energy costs that will occur within communal areas with an aim to achieve full cost recovery;
- A short term resource put in place to address the continuing issues around damp and mould and supplement the work of the Responsive Repairs and Better Places Services to continue into 2023/24 at an additional cost of £102,000 to be funded from SCH General Reserves; and
- The introduction of £1.560m identified savings to ensure a balanced budget over the 4-year period 2022/23 to 2025/26 with £0.131m required in 2023/24.

#### 4. SCH 2023/24 Budget Update

- 4.1 The SCH Finance Team are currently working on the 2022/23 company accounts for the external auditors and the outturn is now known to be a £1.357m overspend compared to the Quarter 3 forecast of a £1.238m overspend reported to SCH Board on 20 February 2023. A full report on the outturn will be presented to the Board at the next meeting.
- 4.2 Whilst a number of financial pressures from 2022/23 have been addressed in the 2023/24 budget, there are new emerging pressures that have been identified since February and these are detailed at Appendix A.
- 4.3 The 2023/24 £551,000 pressure of a higher pay award and increased employer pension contributions would normally be funded from the Budget Strategy Reserve and would be built into the 2024/25 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 4.4 It should be noted that the estimate of additional costs for the pay increase is based on the employer's offer made earlier in the year. The latest information available is that this offer has been rejected by the unions and therefore both the pay increase and employer's pension contribution costs could increase further.

- 4.5 As in previous years, where SCH have savings plans in place, the deliverability of each item is rated Red, Amber or Green. A table of the planned savings is attached at Appendix B and the RAG rating is also indicated. The items identified as red are also included in the emerging pressures detailed at Appendix A

## **5. Funding Options**

- 5.1 Given the significant use of reserves in recent years, the scale of savings required for 2024/25 and 2025/26 and these additional financial pressures, ELT have met to consider options available to address these costs.

- 5.2 Options considered included:

- Whether any planned savings for 2024/25 and 2025/26 could be delivered earlier than planned;
- If there were any staff vacancies that could be unfilled;
- Where costs could be reduced;
- Where services could be redesigned and reduce costs;
- If there are opportunities to generate income/increase charges; and
- Maximising income into the HRA.

- 5.3 The outcome of these meetings has resulted in the savings proposals detailed at Appendix C totalling £464,730 and further work will be undertaken to check the deliverability of all the items.

- 5.4 The SCH Board is asked to note the proposals and identify whether there are any other savings options that need to be reviewed. Any proposals for savings will be investigated and the progress incorporated into the Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Report presented at the next Board meeting.

## **6. SCH Reserves**

- 6.1 SCH hold a total of £7.757m across a number of reserves including a working balance of £1.500m as agreed with the external auditors providing £6.257m available to use.

- 6.2 Reserves held for specific purposes as at 31 March 2023 total £2.958m include £1.506m for Workflow, £1.324m for Structural Surveys (in High Rise Residential Buildings) and £128,000 for Home Options co-location costs. Plans for the use of these reserves will be revisited over the coming months in advance of the 2024/25 MTFS preparation.

- 6.3 The Budget Strategy Reserve (BSR) has reduced over time and as at 31 March 2023 there is £842,000 plus £789,000 earmarked for staffing restructures. After allowing for the use of £551,000 from the BSR, there

would be £291,000 uncommitted which could be reduced further by a higher pay award.

- 6.4 SCH also hold £1.668m in a General Reserve and there are currently no future commitments to spend this.
- 6.5 It is proposed £0.250m is transferred from the earmarked staffing restructures to BSR and that £1.500m is transferred from the SCH General Reserve to the BSR increasing the total available balance from £842,000 to £2.592m and support future MTFS plans.

## **7. Next Steps**

- 7.1 Subject to the Board's approval further work will continue to take place on the robustness of savings plans as well as the initial preparatory work for the 2024/25 MTFS. It is anticipated that 2024/25 will be a year requiring a joint approach for the HRA and SCH between the Council and SCH due to the potential impact of savings.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 The financial implications are included within the content of this report.

## **9. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 9.1 None specifically arising.

## **10. Risk Management Implications**

- 10.1 Financial risks are addressed in the main body of the report and significant financial risks are included within the relevant risk registers.

## **11. Value for Money and Efficiency Considerations/Implications**

- 11.1 None specifically – this report is a monitoring report detailing the usage of available funds across the organisation.

## **12. Tenant Involvement/Consultation**

- 12.1 None required.

## **13. Consistent with Business Plan?**

- 13.1 The operating budget incorporates matters arising within the Business Plan and this report considers progress against delivering the objectives of SCH financially.



**REPORT AUTHOR:**

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## Appendix A

### Additional Pressures not in 2023/24 Budget or Savings Plans

Note		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
		£	£	£
1	2023/24 Pay Award (note 2024/25 and 2025/26 is based on the assumed 2% increase included in our 3-year budget)**	291,000	291,000	291,000
2	Employers Pension contribution following 2023/24 valuation	260,000	508,000	786,000
3	Disrepair Claims (External Legal costs & compensation)	200,000	200,000	200,000
4	Additional Legal SLA cost	50,000	50,000	50,000
5	Mobysoft – reserve funding final year 2023/24		140,000	150,000
	<b>TOTAL ADDITIONAL PRESSURES</b>	<b>801,000</b>	<b>1,189,000</b>	<b>1,477,000</b>
6	Savings RAG rated Red	33,670	285,260	460,160
	<b>TOTAL ADDITIONAL PRESSURES + RAG rated Red savings + Savings not yet RAG Rated (AM)</b>	<b>834,670</b>	<b>1,474,260</b>	<b>1,937,160</b>

### Notes

1. - 2023/24 Pay Award based on original employer offer. The 2024/25 and 2025/26 budget are based on no further increase than the assumed 2% increase included in our 3-year budget.
2. – WM Pension Fund triannual valuation increased the employer contribution payable and the CFO secured an agreed phased approach.
3. – There is no budget for disrepair claims and despite efforts to reduce the impact, the latest indications are that we will incur continued additional costs in 2023/24 and beyond.
4. – Renegotiated Legal SLA based on current experience.
5. – Licence costs incurable after 2023/24 and unlikely to be able to reduce service costs to accommodate this as originally anticipated. This does not include potential licence fees for any One-SCH estimated as an additional £90,000.
6. – See Appendix B for details.



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## Appendix B

Saving Theme	2023/24 Saving £	2024/25 Saving £	2025/26 Saving £
<b>Accommodation</b> Reduced accommodation due to the move Housing Options team moving from Coppice Way into the Bluebell Centre and a review of office accommodation in the North of the borough with an objective of consolidating into less locations.	62,000	139,000	216,000
<b>Capital</b> Reduce communal utility costs by increasing use of green initiatives (eg solar panels) and target capital investment / planned maintenance to replace on lifecycle rather than component failure.	0	50,000	51,000
<b>Contract Management</b> Quantity Surveyor to provide commercial support to identify savings in procurement practices	15,000	15,000	16,000
<b>Miscellaneous Operational Costs</b> Cease provision of catering for internal only events and minor efficiencies within other operating budgets.	5,000	5,000	25,000
<b>Realignment of Services</b> Review potential internal delivery of appropriate services and reintegrate Better Places workforce into wider Asset Management Team Review out of hours service Review of business support across the organisation Exploitation of Rent Service efficiencies Reduce subsidy to the temporary accommodation support contract Efficiencies generated by digital investment (eg One-SCH) Investigate benefits of additional shared services with the Council	48,000	265,000	346,000
<b>Staffing</b> Integrate apprentice posts into base staffing establishment	0	150,000	152,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130,000</b>	<b>624,000</b>	<b>806,000</b>

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Directorate	Description	Comment	Action by	2023/24 Budget £	2024/25 Budget £	2025/26 Budget £
<b>SAVINGS IDENTIFIED TO OFFSET ADDITIONAL COST PRESSURES</b>						
Asset Management	Increase solar panels (or wind turbines) - is there scope to harness electricity or sell it back to the grid?	Additional £10k saving for saving ref AM01 - agreed at ELT 04/04/23 as savings can be introduced as they are identified as part of current review	MB	(10,000)	0	0
Asset Management	Grant Funding - Eco Grant - SHDF Decarb Fund Wave 2	Grant includes £30k which can be claimed for admin support. Assume that this will be an existing member of staff that will be funded by this income	MB	(30,000)	0	0
Asset Management	Bromford Small Homes - 'Surplus' on contract with Adults and potential contract with Children's Services	Fixed fee agreed for initial 12 months with Adult Care & Support at the Council. Saving based on works being undertaken by existing staff.  No income assumed yet from Childrens Services	MB	(20,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)
Asset Management	Energy Officer - additional tasks	Additional tasks could be brought inhouse - eg 'Maxking Contract' - spend £28k and Energy Billing - Spend £95k. Current saving based on Maxking ONLY pending further work to identify all responsibilities and implications of bringing customer billing for Biomass inhouse.	ELT	0	(28,000)	(28,000)
Asset Management	Communal Decorating - Planned Works	Reduce the spend by 1/3. Impact - extend 5-yearly cycle to approx 7 years.	ELT	(50,000)	(51,700)	(52,730)
Chief Executive	Amend staff conference to every 18 months with every other conference a 'mini' conference	Additional saving agreed at ELT 04/04/23 - Reduce 2024/25 to £10k budget for 'mini' conference and remove completely in 2025/26. Conferences to be held April 2023, October 2024 and April 2026.	MS	0	(10,000)	(20,000)
Cross Cutting	Business Support Review	Additional £10k saving agreed at ELT 04/04/23 for saving ref CC15 - £10k one-off saving in 2023/24.	MS	(10,000)	0	0
CST & BS	Endeavour House - Stationery	Reduce by £4,000 as budget generally underspent		(4,000)	(4,140)	(4,220)
CST & BS	Endeavour House - ICT Consumables (printing)	Reduce by £10,000 as budget generally underspent		(10,000)	(10,340)	(10,550)
CST & BS	Endeavour House - Other premises Costs	Reduce budget in line with current levels of spend		(12,000)	(8,000)	(4,000)
CST & BS	IT Services & Digital Trans - Software Licenses Support	One-off saving as budget reduced already from 2025/26		(20,000)	0	0
CST & BS	Board Admin - Officer Expenses	Reduce by £2,500 as budget generally underspent		(2,500)	(2,500)	(2,500)
CST & BS	Board Admin - Training	Reduce by £3,000 as budget generally underspent		(3,000)	(3,100)	(3,160)
CST & BS	Training - Training	Reduce by £10,000 as budget generally underspent		(10,000)	(10,340)	(10,550)
CST & BS	Comms - Advertising, Publicity & Promotion	Remove unused budget		(530)	(550)	(560)
CST & BS	Comms - Client Expenses	Remove 50% of budget as budget generally underspent		(2,700)	(2,700)	(2,700)
CST & BS	Comms - Printing	Reduce by £10,000 as budget generally underspent		(10,000)	(10,340)	(10,550)

Directorate	Description	Comment	Action by	2023/24 Budget £	2024/25 Budget £	2025/26 Budget £
CST & BS	Customer Engagement - Localities Manager	Hold post vacant for 2023/24	BY / MS	(60,000)	0	0
Housing & Communities	Money Advice	Consider removing the SCH service and direct customers to the Council and Citizens Advice Bureau services. Funding is available from the Welfare Reform Reserve for two years for one Team Leader and one Caseworker ... so could consider reducing service provision to these two posts until the end of 2024/25	CT	(160,000)	(160,000)	(158,000)
Housing & Communities	High & Low Rise - Cleaning	Contract cost is £720k compared to budgets of £857k, £886k and £903k. Reduction of £50k per year to allow funding for potential chargeable window cleaning and / or deep cleans		(50,000)	(51,700)	(52,940)
TOTAL ADDITIONAL SAVINGS				(464,730)	(373,410)	(380,460)
NET COST PRESSURES / (SAVINGS)				336,270	815,590	1,096,540
OTHER SAVINGS SUGGESTIONS NOT YET COSTED / INCLUDING IN SAVINGS PROPOSALS AS AT MAY 2023						
Asset Management	Grant Funding - Decency Fund	Should be able to capitalise existing staffing costs, however, no financial information is available at present.	MB	0	0	0
Asset Management	Dodds Contract Overheads	Reduction in local overheads may create a saving however SMBC have agreed increases in profit and overheads from 2.5% and 3% to 3.5% and 3.5% respectively which may reduce this saving.	MB	0	0	0
Asset Management	Materials	Review cost of high value / high volume materials	DB / MB	0	0	0
Asset Management	Development	Consider stopping all development activity. Current investigating whether more staff time can be capitalised to reduce costs.	ELT	0	(60,800)	(61,990)
Asset Management	Stores and Delivery	Review outsourcing the service	ELT	0	0	0
Asset Management	Fleet Management	Currently reviewing the potential savings associated with sharing vans and potential impact of an 'Eco' Fleet. Mike Brymer also investigating the impact of extending the lease on the current vehicles. Savings would not be generated until 2024/25 when the new fleet is acquired.	MB	0	0	0
Asset Management	Voids	Review void process to try and reduce timeline and associated costs (eg council tax). Current turnaround time key to key is 25 days so it may be difficult to achieve further savings.	DB / MB	0	0	0
Asset Management	Feasibility Works	Linked to stopping development work therefore feasibility works would not be needed. Savings could be achieved without stopping development activity as this budget is routinely underspent so a reduction of £30k is likely to have no impact on service delivery. In addition advice from the Capital Accountant at the Council has confirmed that it is acceptable to move the point at which costs are capitalised from the point of planning approval to the point of cabinet approval which again would reduce the cost within this budget.	ELT	0	(79,790)	(81,390)
Asset Management	Repairs Policy	Repairs policy being reviewed this year so it may be possible to look at the scope of works to achieve savings as part of this exercise, therefore any savings would not be achieved until 2024/25 at the earliest.	DB / MB / SG / MM	0	0	0



Directorate	Description	Comment	Action by	2023/24 Budget £	2024/25 Budget £	2025/26 Budget £
Asset Management	Externalisation of Asset Management workforce	Should the operative workforce be outsourced? Please note current information shows outside organisations using NatFed +8% to +15% where as SCH uses Natfed +0%.	ELT	0	0	0
Asset Management	Consider all vacant posts for deferral / deletion	Not an exhaustive list of vacant posts at present but some areas for consideration: - Team Leader Better Places - Contract Administrator	ELT	0	0	0
Cross Cutting	SMBC Support Services & wider HRA	Review cost of support services provided by SMBC to SCH and Client costs within the HRA.	FH / SG / MM	0	0	0
Cross Cutting	Review the combining of various teams across the organisation	Initial suggestions: - Customer Liaison Team & Customer Engagement (Note partially capital funded) - Scheduling and Contact Centre	ELT	0	0	0
Cross Cutting	Review of 'Core' Services to identify 'Non Core' Services that could be stopped		ELT	0	0	0
Cross Cutting	Telephones	Review cost of Telephones, Ipads, etc (with a chargeable SIM card) across SCH to ensure SCH are not being charged for unused equipment	ELT	0	0	0
Cross Cutting	Possible introduction of 'Seasonal roles' to support peaks and troughs in workload		ELT	0	0	0
Cross Cutting	Increase the number of annual leave days staff can purchase each year		ELT	0	0	0
CST & BS	Policy & Performance - Professional Fees	Becci Youlden to review use of Acuity surveys	BY	0	0	0
CST & BS	Executive Support Team - Pay	Business Support post to be reviewed to see if this post can be held vacant for 2023/24	SB / MS	0	0	0

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## SCH: HOUSING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE - 11 May 2023

### MINUTES

Present: Phil Hardy (Chair), April Halpin, Gail Sleigh, Louise Tubbs.

Officers: Fiona Hughes - Chief Executive, Darren Baggs - Executive Director of Operations, Martyn Sargeant - Executive Director of Customer Service, Transformation and Business Support, Carol Trappett - Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods, Mike Brymer - Head of Asset Management, Becci Youlden - Head of Customer Experience, Andy Duke - Development Manager, Sarah Brookes - Business Support Manager/minutes, Dale Taber, SCHape Member/Observer.

#### 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alison McGrory, Alison Clark Williams and Verity Sayers.

Phil Hardy welcomed everyone to the meeting and special thanks to Dale Taber who attended of behalf of the SCHape Panel for Item 8 – Engagement Update.

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

#### 3. LATE PAPERS

There were no late papers.

#### 4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true and accurate record.

#### 5. ACTION LOG OF DECISIONS

The action log was reviewed and approved.

#### 6. YEAR END STAR AND TRANSACTIONAL SATISFACTION SURVEYS

Denise Raine, Director of Acuity, presented the 2022-23 Resident Satisfaction Surveys report (copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes).

The results from the surveys during 2022/23 show very good levels of satisfaction with the services provided by SCH. 78% of tenants are satisfied with the overall services provided and this sits broadly in the middle of the range of measures with the highest satisfaction for tenants being treated fairly and with respect (85%), building safety information (85%) and SCH being easy to deal with (81%). The lowest ratings related to the upkeep of communal areas (65%) and the handling of ASB and complaints (both 62%).

Denise Raine asked SCH to focus on the key driver analysis and the voice of the customer, these have the biggest influence on overall satisfaction with the services provided.

## SCH: HOUSING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE - 11 May 2023

Phil Hardy, Chair, thanked Denise Raine for her presentation and congratulated the team on the very good levels of satisfaction provided by SCH.

April Halpin's question, which had previously been emailed in advance of the meeting, was covered during the presentation and she was pleased that we ask for information about dissatisfaction from our residents.

Louise Tubbs mentioned that the dissatisfaction in communal areas appears to be a re-occurring theme.

Denise Raine confirmed that the increase in 'quality of home' is a reversal of figures previously seen (it used to be repairs and maintenance).

Phil Hardy asked about the methodology for surveys and Denise Raine confirmed that it is 100% phone contact. Additional perception surveys will be undertaken (beyond the current 150 per quarter) to meet the new TSM requirements.

Phil Hardy asked Denise Raine about the statistical accuracy and the confidence level that our current sample provides. Denise agreed to provide this information.

**ACTION:** Confirm the statistical accuracy and the confidence level that our current sample provides (Denise Raine).

Dale Taber asked about the surveys completed and if there is a bad survey what SCH do to follow up the process. Becci Youlden, Head of Customer Experience, explained that we work with Acuity to identify flag factors (red, amber and green) and this is prioritised within her team. A deep dive exercise is completed particularly around H&S issues. Becci confirmed that the new Business Intelligence team will review comments in more detail.

### 7. SCH PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 4/YEAR END 2022/23

Becci Youlden presented the Performance update report and clarified the 'year-end position' column on the performance dashboard:

- The column headed 'Actual' is the monthly position and the column headed 'Year-End position' is the cumulative position as at the end of March. The RAG status is measured from the position as at the end of the year.

Phil Hardy queried AM1b and asked for clarification of our electrical safety statutory position and if any of the electrical inspections for our 'no access' properties exceed 10 years or do not have an electrical certificate. Mike Brymer, Head of Asset Management, confirmed that the guidance is currently non-statutory and the 19 'no access properties' are actively being managed and focussed discussions are being held with the Neighbourhood Services team and our contractor Dodd Group. Mike Brymer will identify if any of these properties are within our high rise portfolio and will provide more detailed commentary on the action being taken on future performance reports.

**ACTION:** Confirm if any of the properties that do not have a satisfactory electrical condition report are within high rise accommodation (Mike Brymer).

Phil Hardy asked that future reports include more commentary on the action being taken for AM20 and how work in progress is affecting the performance rating (average

## **SCH: HOUSING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE - 11 May 2023**

number of days to complete repairs). Mike Brymer explained that following guidance from Housemark some of our methodology for reporting has been amended. Consequently, for this KPI work orders remain open until completion to ensure the data we are reporting is in accordance with the KPI definition.

Mike Brymer also confirmed that detailed analysis work has been undertaken on the number of repairs per property and this review has established that we are receiving a higher volume of work than anticipated. Further work is being undertaken to address this issue however the increase in the volume of repairs is having a negative impact on the time to complete repairs.

Phil Hardy acknowledged the complex nature of this work and would like to continue to monitor this; requesting more detailed commentary in the performance report that is taken to Board. Mike Brymer agreed to provide this information.

**ACTION:** Provide more detailed commentary on KPI AM20 (Mike Brymer).

Fiona Hughes, Chief Executive, identified that KPI HO3a (average stay in budget hotels for families with children) was an area that is below target and highlighted her concern. There has been 500+ approaches to the Housing Options service during 2022/2023, attributing to the impact of the Ukrainian war, domestic abuse and the end of private sector tenancies. This has impacted on the demand for temporary and secure accommodation resulting in an increased reliance on hotel accommodation and extended stays for those acquiring the accommodation.

Fiona Hughes confirmed that 'item 10' on the agenda provides detailed information about the increase in demand on the service area and how this has resulted in increased use of hotel accommodation. A specific piece of work has been undertaken and several actions have been agreed to reduce the need for families to be placed in hotel accommodation. Fiona Hughes provided assurance to the Committee that this is a priority for 2023/24 and SCH are working closely with SMBC's Childrens Services to embed excellent ways of working together.

### **8. ENGAGEMENT UPDATE**

Becci Youlden presented an update on the current and future engagement work across SCH. An up to date 'Plan on a Page' was included as Appendix 1.

Gail Sleigh asked for clarification regarding the procedure for determining when and where the estate walkabouts are conducted. Becci Youlden explained that the information from both staff and the Acuity reports are used to focus on areas of concern or interest to improve our neighbourhoods. A six month timetable is formulated from the insight information and this is circulated on social media and emailed to our Virtual Improvement Panel. Becci Youlden encouraged ideas from the Committee for improving our communication methods and encouraging more interest from our residents.

Phil Hardy thanked Becci Youlden for including transactional information on the Engagement Framework and acknowledged the excellent work that is being undertaken by the Engagement team.

Phil Hardy noted the improvements that are being implemented following the engagement activity and noted the information included on Appendix 2 under the 'Outcomes' heading. For next time, Becci Youlden agreed that more detailed

## **SCH: HOUSING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE - 11 May 2023**

information will be included within the outcomes column so that Committee can have a comprehensive understanding of the changes implemented. For example, if a policy has been changed it is helpful to understand the amendments.

**Action:** Update the Impact and Outcomes of Engagement Plan with comprehensive information of changes implemented (Becci Youlden).

### **9. DISREPAIR, DAMP AND MOULD (SCHAPE REPORT ON DAMP & MOULD AS APPENDIX)**

Mike Brymer provided the Committee with an update on SCH's approach to the management of disrepair, damp and mould within the housing stock.

Mike Brymer confirmed that activity within this area of work has significantly increased putting pressure on the service area. The majority of disrepair claims include a reference to damp and mould as one of the primary complaint areas.

The disrepair, damp and mould action plan (appendix 1) provided an update on the progress against the actions that have taken place during the previous 12 months and additional temporary resources have been introduced.

A damp and mould policy has been developed and as part of the policy development process, the SCHape Panel agreed to review the proposed policy and provide feedback. A copy of the feedback was included in Appendix 3.

Dale Taber, SCHape panel member, summarised the key recommendations from the SCHape panel review. He particularly noted:

- Timescales for inspections need to be agreed and clearly communicated.
- Reference should be made, at the beginning of the policy, that the cause of damp and mould could be related to the structure of the building and not just lifestyle.
- The health risks and the symptoms such as respiratory tract symptoms, should be referenced within the policy.
- It was suggested that a leaflet should be introduced with information relating to ventilation in bathrooms and properties that don't have a window in the bathroom.

Mike Brymer confirmed that the feedback was acknowledged and welcomed the input.

Gail Sleight and April Halpin identified that we should be re-educating residents and advice needs to be provided to ensure residents manage condensation within their homes. Mike Brymer confirmed that a leaflet is sent to residents when damp, mould or condensation issues are reported. SCH will also advise and will assist with the prevention of this in the future.

April Halpin asked if we request information from residents about how long residents have had damp and mould. It was confirmed that Acuity have been asking transactional questions during their surveys.

Phil Hardy acknowledged that this is a comprehensive piece of work and the progress that has been made. He recommended that a summary of the policy is appended to ensure that it is accessible by all. He would also like to see the resolution process extend beyond the property and signpost to other services (overcrowding and poverty are key causes). Consideration should also be given to those residents that already

## SCH: HOUSING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE - 11 May 2023

have underlying health conditions and whether more tailored interventions are required.

**ACTION:** Incorporate a plain English summary of the damp, mould and condensation policy to ensure it is accessible by all customers and incorporate SCHape panel feedback (Mike Brymer/Becci Youlden).

**ACTION:** Review the resolution process to ensure that it extends beyond the property and signpost residents to other services including access to funding/support (Mike Brymer).

**ACTION:** Consider those residents that already have underlying health conditions and whether more tailored interventions are required (Mike Brymer).

### 10. HOMELESSNESS AND ALLOCATIONS YEAR END UPDATE

Carol Trappett, Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods, presented the Homelessness and Allocations update on behalf of Verity Sayers who is heavily involved with the British nationals evacuated from Sudan.

She confirmed why Homeless approaches have risen and the temporary accommodation action plan 2023/24 detailed under 5.10 seeks to address the concerns raised about the increased use of hotel accommodation for families.

Appendix 2 and 3 provides more detail about the wider commissioned services for homelessness and the Council's rough sleeping activity.

Phil Hardy asked for information on the number of Ukrainian households that have been managed by SCH to provide further understanding about the impact on temporary accommodation. Carol Trappett will provide this information.

- **Action** - Provide information regarding the number of Ukrainian households managed and accommodated by SCH (Carol Trappett/Verity Sayers)

### 11. ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

Martyn Sargeant, Executive Director of Customer Service Transformation and Business Support, and Mike Brymer presented the energy and environmental sustainability update.

Martyn Sargeant acknowledged Phil Hardy's comment about updating the table when actions have been completed and this will be incorporated on future reports

Gail Sleight asked how the heating consumption has been reduced within offices and Martyn confirmed the measures taken by SCH.

April Halpin asked how residents can find out the EPC rating of their properties. Mike Brymer confirmed that SCH can provide this information, or you can obtain the information online from the Governments website ([www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate](http://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate)).

### 12. NEW BUILD AND ACQUISITIONS UPDATE

Andy Duke, Development Manager, provided an update on the progress and delivery of the SCH new build projects. He particularly highlighted:

## **SCH: HOUSING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE - 11 May 2023**

- Due diligence is being undertaken on the tender returns for the demolition of the existing building at Lakeside, demolition work is expected to commence in the summer.
- Andy highlighted the potential need to acquire sections of tenant's gardens adjacent to access drives on garage sites at Daylesford Road for access purpose. This would require negotiation and remuneration with the residents effected.
- SMBC/UKC are currently progressing with designs for circa 21 new family homes. SCH have been asked to take on the project once planning permission has been obtained, we are currently acting in an advisory role.
- Homes England have confirmed changes to their grant funding programme, bids for grant will now be considered for all affordable units and not just net additional. This change is very welcomed at Kingshurst Village Centre and could see grant levels up to £96k per unit MMC and net zero standards. Andy is currently in discussion with finance regarding our current financial appraisals and how we calculate borrowing capacity.
- Escalating inflation in the construction sector will impact on borrowing and overall scheme costs. This is being closely monitored on our existing and planned projects; cost estimates on pipeline schemes have been increased to take into account inflationary rises.

Gail Sleight asked about the redevelopment of Greenhill Way and Andy Duke confirmed that the site will be demolished due to low EPC ratings and overall poor performance as highlighted in the recent stock condition survey the building is also coming towards the end of its life. SMBC have expressed interest in using the existing building as temporary accommodation and their plans are currently progressing, development are also involved in these conversations and will update on a finalised strategy.

Phil Hardy asked Andy Duke to confirm HE payment schedules for any grant awarded, Andy Duke stated that it will be dependent on the grant agreement.

### **13. FORWARD PLAN**

The forward plan was reviewed and there were no further items.

### **14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no additional business raised.

### **15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 18 SEPTEMBER 2023 @ 4.30PM**

Meeting finished at 18:09

Signed by Chair of Committee:

Date:



# 2022-23 Resident Satisfaction Surveys

Housing Operations Committee - 11 May 2023  
Denise Raine, Director



# Session Outline

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- 2022-23 SCH surveys
- STAR / TSM (Perception surveys)
  - Key Driver analysis
  - Voice of the customer
  - Trend data
  - Benchmarking
- Transactional surveys
- Thoughts to leave you with / Considerations



# 2022-23 Surveys

## TSM / STAR


### Perception surveys

- Quarterly STAR/TSM surveys (150 residents each quarter)

- Six months Pilot TSMs /  
Six months Final TSMs

### Transactional surveys

- 13 transactional surveys



		Number of interviews in period	Reliability - annually	Target interviews per month (STAR Quarterly)	Estimated service users
Creating Homes	Responsive repairs	2044	±2.1%	2400	40,000
	Safer homes	249	±4.8%	240	600
	Sprinklers	237	±5.0%	240	633
	Aids & Adaptations	235	±4.6%	240	480
	Capital works	36	±16.1%	420	1,080
More than bricks and mortar	New tenants	258	±4.8%	240	700
	Housing Options	156	±7.2%	300	1,000
	Estate services	607	±3.9%	600	10,000
	Well-being	239	±5.4%	240	840
Strengthening communities	ASB	56	±12.5%	300	600
	Money Advice Team	57	±11.0%	120	200
Excellent Customer Services	Contact centre	1158	±2.9%	1080	180,000
	Complaints	93	±8.1%	216	250
	TSM	608	±3.9%	600	10,000

When considering the results, it is important that the national context and external factors should also be taken into account.

For example:

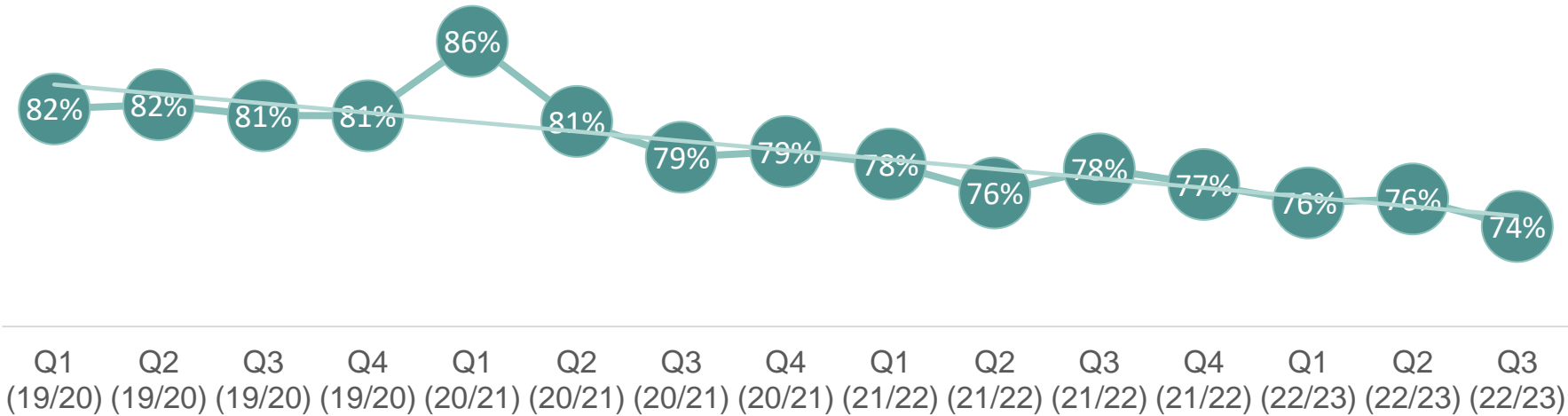
- Cost of Living Crisis
- Covid, Government & Political Changes, Strikes
- Uncertainty about the future
- Climate changes
- Brexit and the economy

In addition, there have been a number of high-profile negative stories in the press regarding social housing landlords.

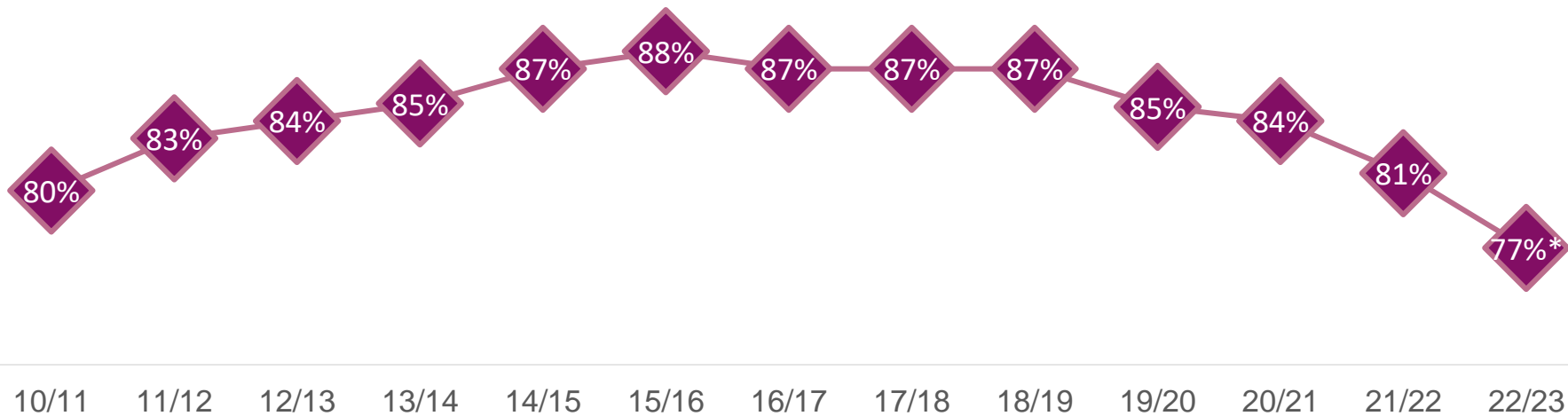
Satisfaction is based on perception rather than specific values so can be affected by these factors and how positive people feel about their lives.

# National Context

Overall Services (Acuity Clients)



Satisfaction with services provided (NHF/Housemark median - general needs)



\*As reported by Housemark in January 2023.

**Key metric** – 78% satisfied with the overall services provided. This sits in the middle of the range of results.

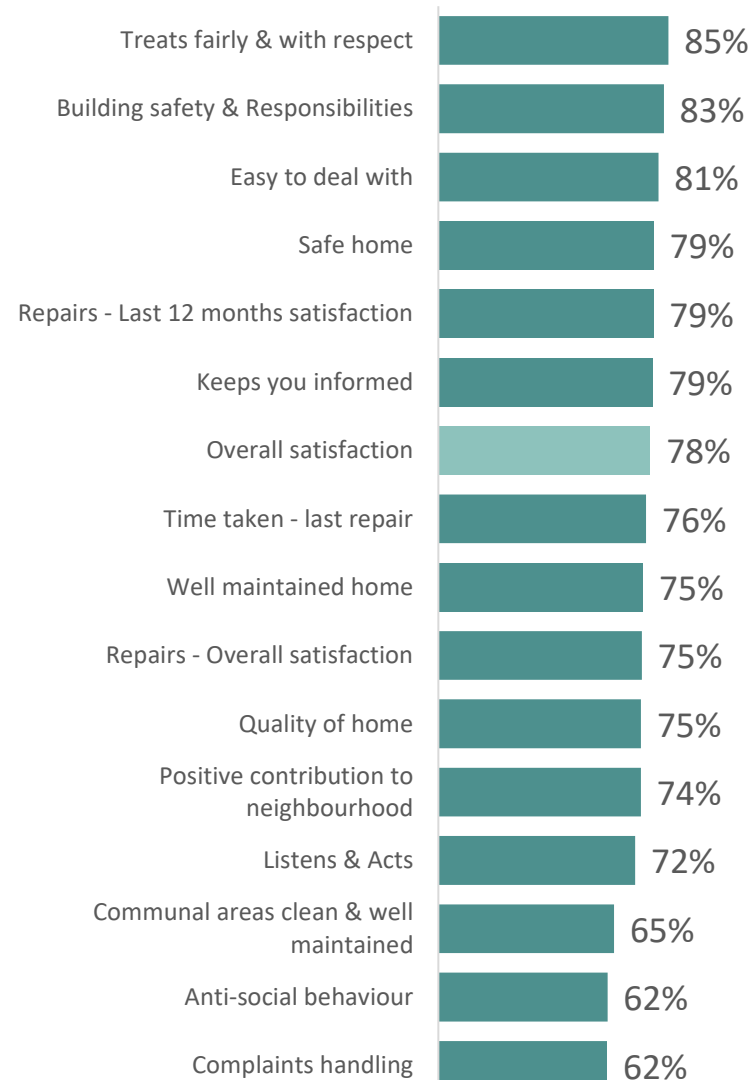
**Highest ratings** – Tenants treated fairly and with respect (85%), building safety information (83%) and SCH being easy to deal with (81%).

**Lowest ratings** – Upkeep of the communal areas (65%) and the handling of ASB and complaints (both 62%).

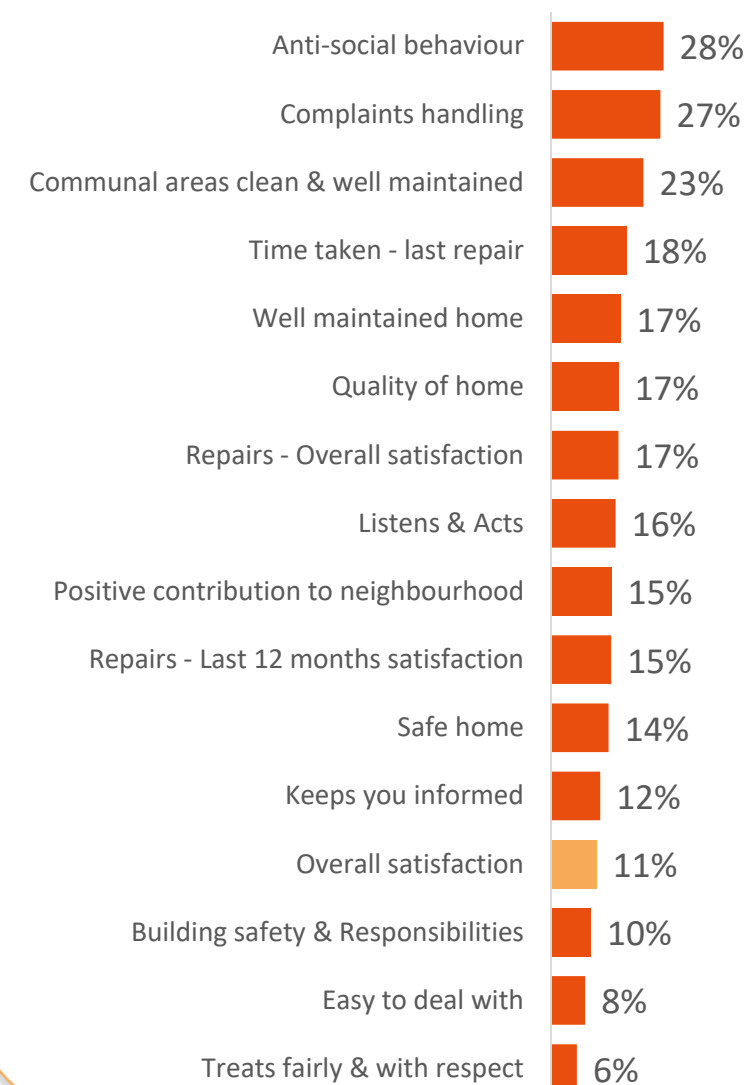
Over a quarter of tenants are dissatisfied with ASB and complaints handling and upkeep of the communal areas.

# Annual Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction

## Satisfaction with measures 2022/23



## Dissatisfaction with measures 2022/23

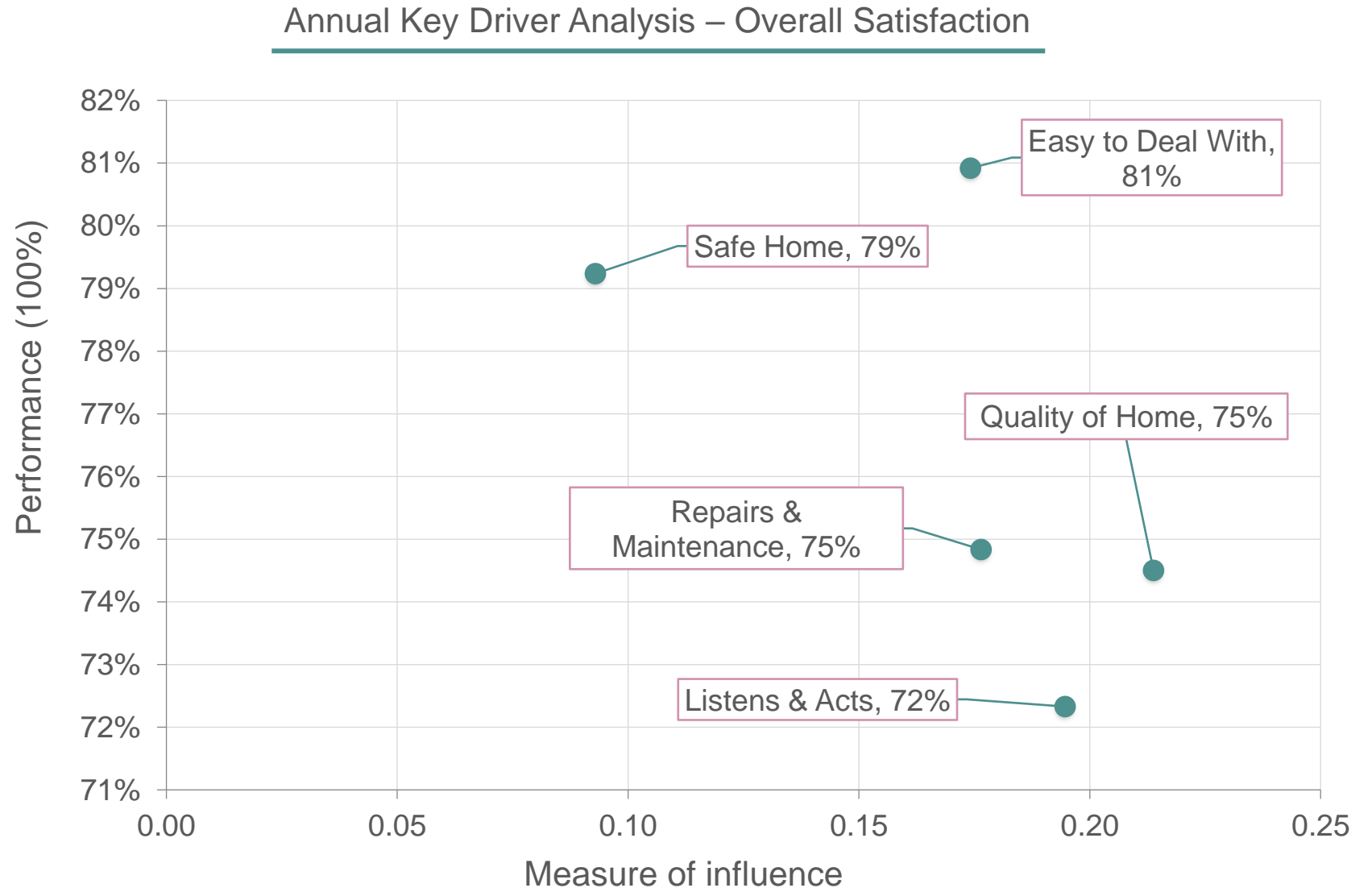


# Key Driver Analysis

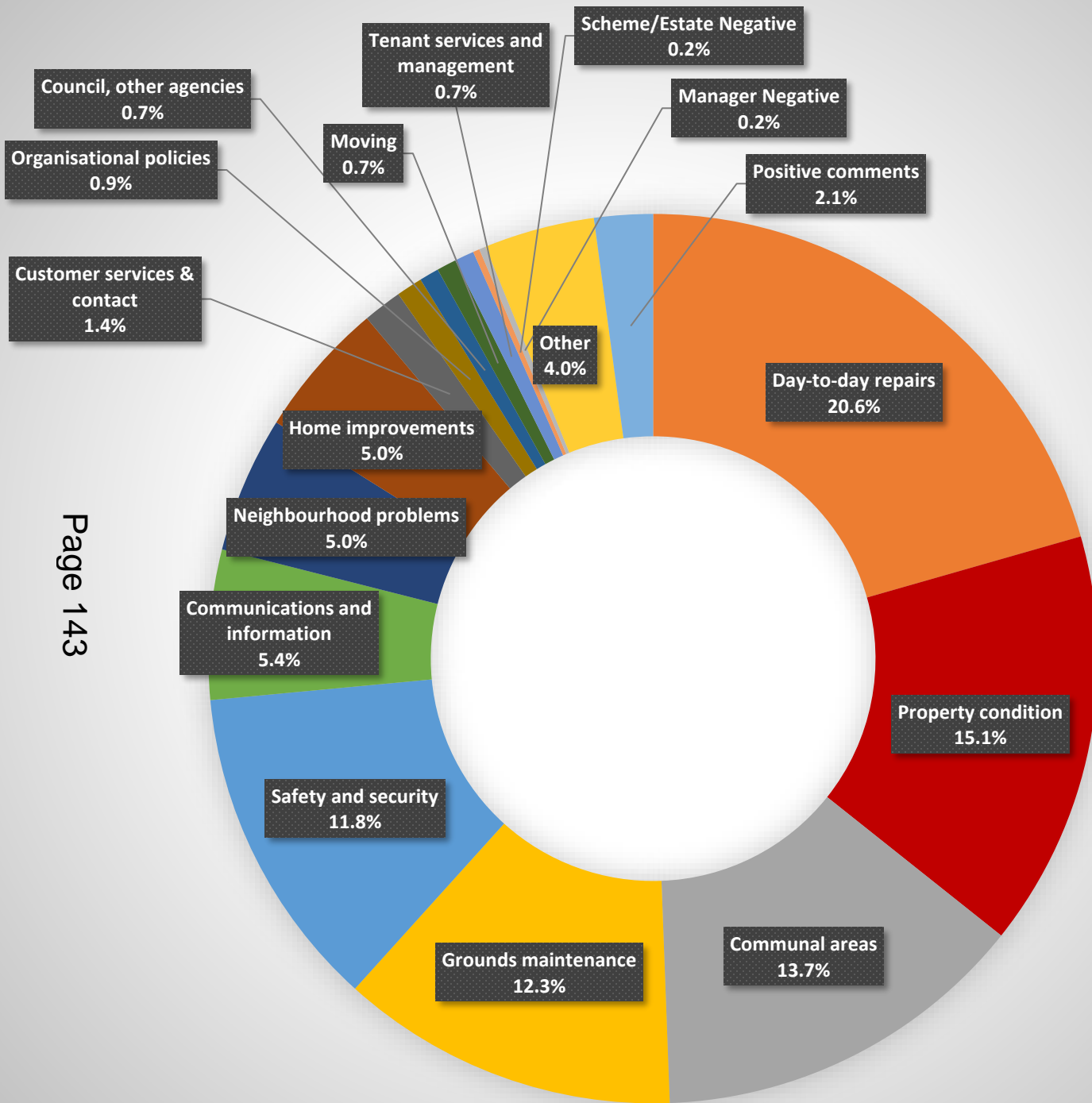
Key driver analysis is used to examine the relationship between the different variables (the questions asked in the survey) and determine which elements of the service are the key drivers for tenants' overall satisfaction.

When combining all the results for 2022/23, the most important driver for tenants' satisfaction with the overall services, is the quality of the home, followed quite closely by SCH listening to tenants' views and acting upon them and being easy to deal with. The repairs and maintenance service and the provision of a safe home are also important but not as influential.

The implication of this analysis is that if improvements around the most influential measures can be achieved, it is more likely to lead to increased satisfaction with the overall services provided.







## Annual Comments

- Home or communal areas are safe and well-maintained or with the information on building safety
- 423 comments received

## Hot Topics

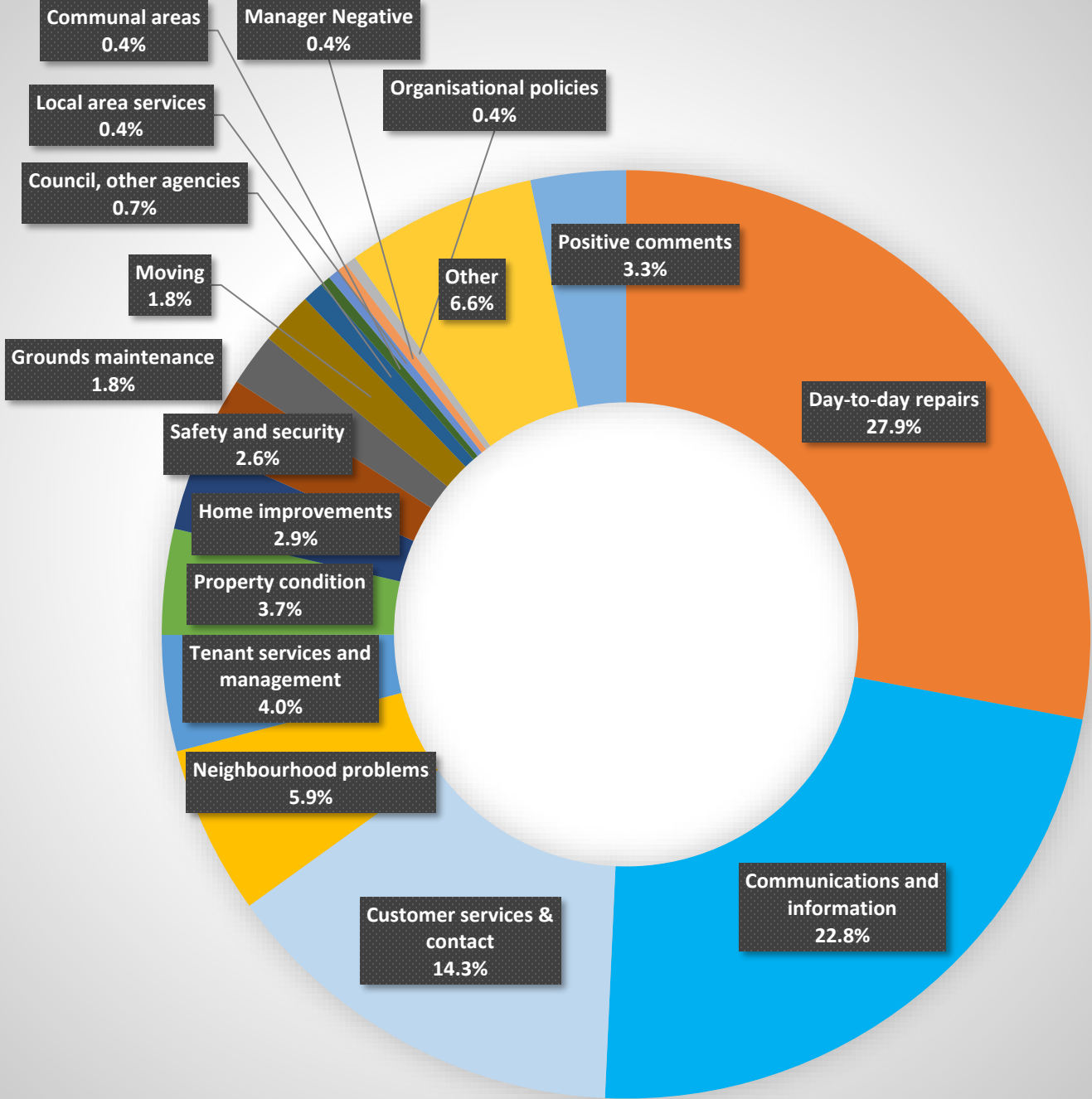
Outstanding / forgotten repairs	31
Timescales to complete repairs	28
Damp / mould / condensation	26
Quality of cleaning service	25
Door security in communal areas	15
Condition of the property	13
Information on service standards	11

# Annual Comments

- Listens to your views or keeps you informed
- 272 comments received

## Hot Topics

Outstanding / forgotten repairs	24
Timescales to complete repairs	16
Communications (in general)	15
Keep tenants up to date	15
Listen carefully, take interest	14
Communication about repair (before work started)	10





# Year on Year Trend

## Changes in last year

**Higher** – Repairs overall (perception), building safety and responsibilities, listens and acts upon views (remember – linked to repairs).

**Higher** – Overall services provided, SCH being easy to deal with.

**Lower** – Quality of the home, *safe home*, communal areas.

	2021/22	2022/23	Difference	Difference
Overall satisfaction	78.3%	77.9%	-0.4%	=
Quality of home	76.0%	74.5%	-1.5%	↓
Safe home	83.0%	79.2%	-3.7%	↓
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	71.5%	74.8%	3.4%	↑
Communal areas clean & well maintained	73.1%	64.6%	-8.5%	↓
Building safety & Responsibilities	76.0%	82.9%	6.9%	↑
Easy to deal with	81.0%	80.9%	-0.1%	=
Listens & Acts	69.7%	72.3%	2.7%	↑

*Note: A difference of  $\pm 7.8\%$  is required to be statistically significant*

# 12 Month Rolling Averages

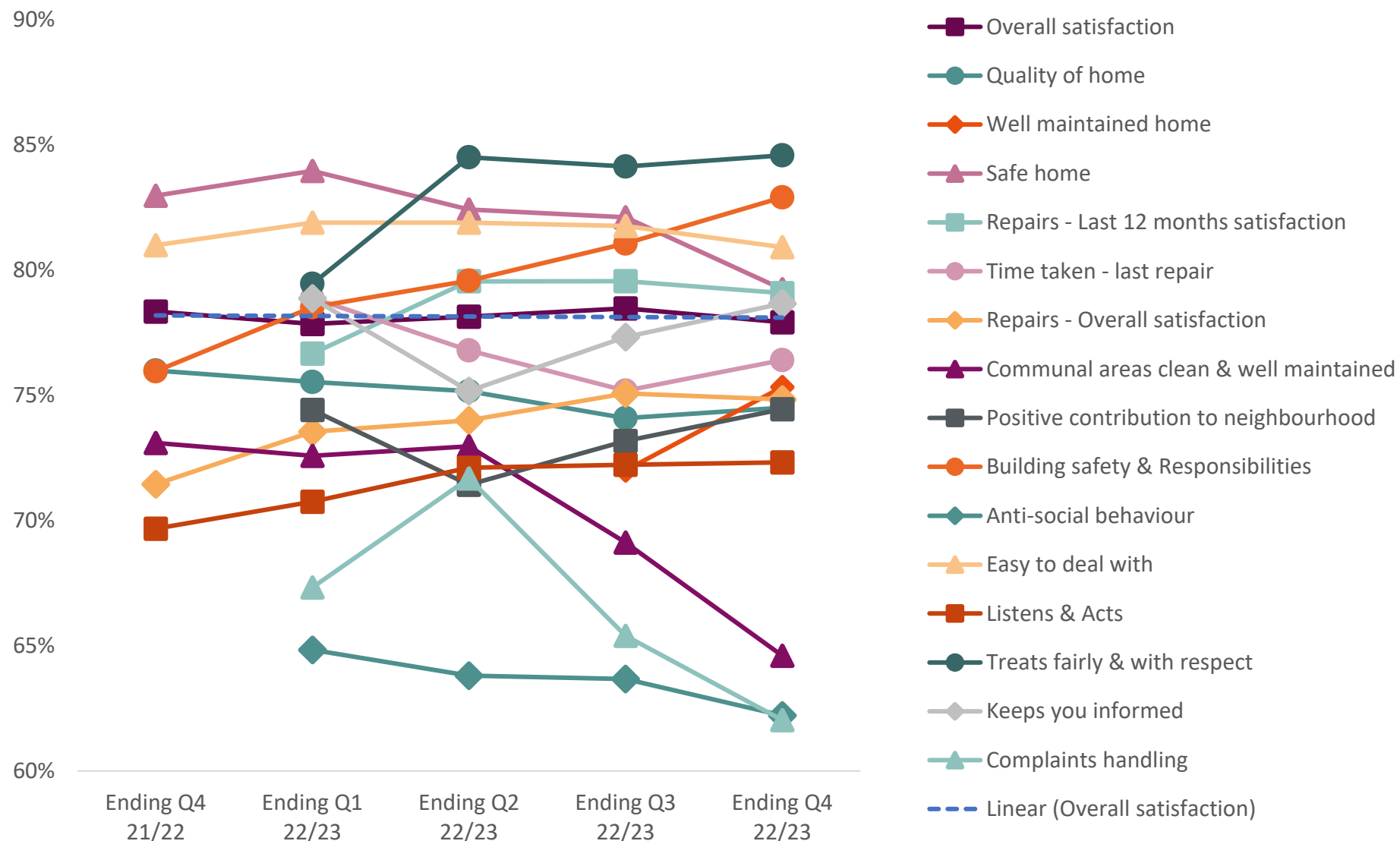
## Trendlines

**Increasing** – Repairs (last 12 months), building safety, listens and acts upon views, treated fairly and with respect.

**Holding** – Overall score, overall repairs, contribution to the neighbourhood, easy to deal with, kept informed.

**Decreasing** – Quality of the home, *safe home*, time taken for last repair, communal areas, ASB.

**Not included** – Complaints handling.



*\*From Q3 2022/23 satisfaction with complaints handling is now only asked to those who had used the service in the last 12 months. And safe home changed from "safe and secure" to "well maintained and safe" in Q1 22/23 and to just "safe" in Q3 22/23.*

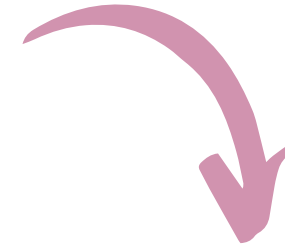
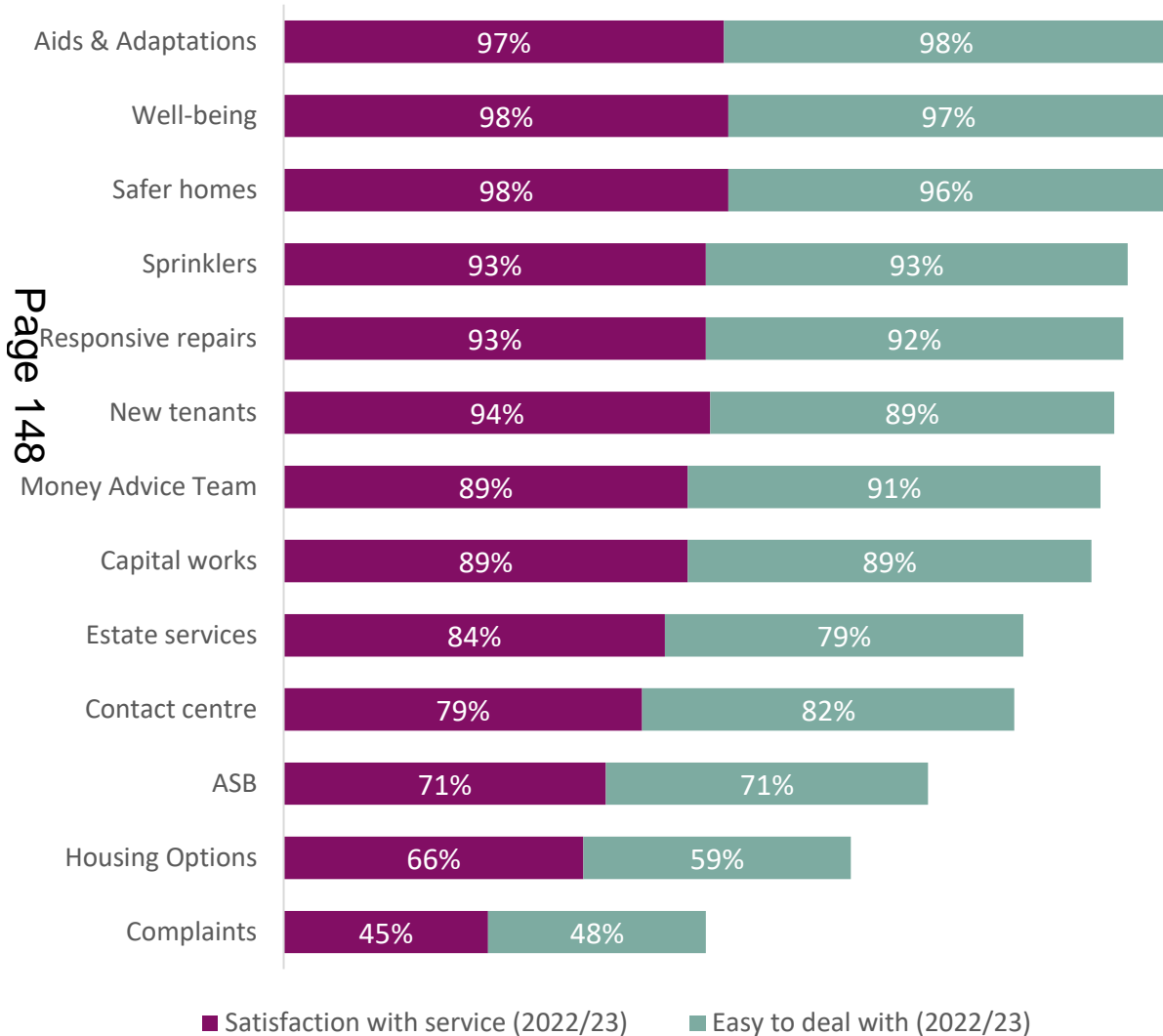
# Benchmarking – Acuity

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# Transactional Surveys

Satisfaction with service to date



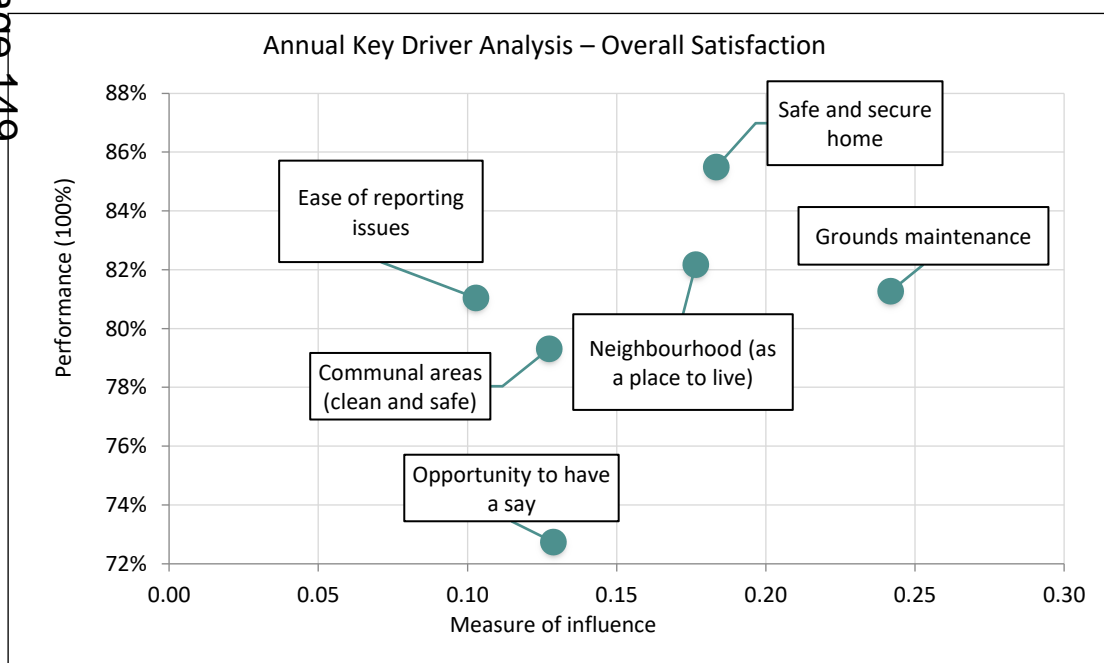
	Overall service (Difference between 22/23 and 21/22)	Easy to deal with (Difference between 22/23 and 21/22)
Aids & Adaptations	1%	1%
Well-being	2%	0%
Safer homes	1%	1%
Sprinklers	0%	0%
Responsive repairs	2%	2%
New tenants	11%	4%
Money Advice Team	6%	2%
Capital works	-4%	-1%
Estate services	1%	0%
Contact centre	-7%	-2%
ASB	3%	2%
Housing Options	-4%	-4%
Complaints	7%	5%

# Transactional Surveys

**Estate services** – Lowest score for having a say in service management (63%), with higher levels of dissatisfaction in this area (21%) and with communal areas being clean and safe (20%). But it is not all bad news, grounds maintenance has increased by 4% since the previous year. Are residents' comments being followed up?

**Key Driver Analysis** – the biggest driver of overall satisfaction is grounds maintenance, followed by a safe home and a neighbourhood tenants want to live in.

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**Contact centre** –  
Largest fall

Lowest scores for the final outcome of enquiry and enquiry being resolved during the first call.

A large number of comments linked to repairs and customer service (as expected).

The table shows hot topics, that may be worth further analysis/review of comments, with feedback given to the team.

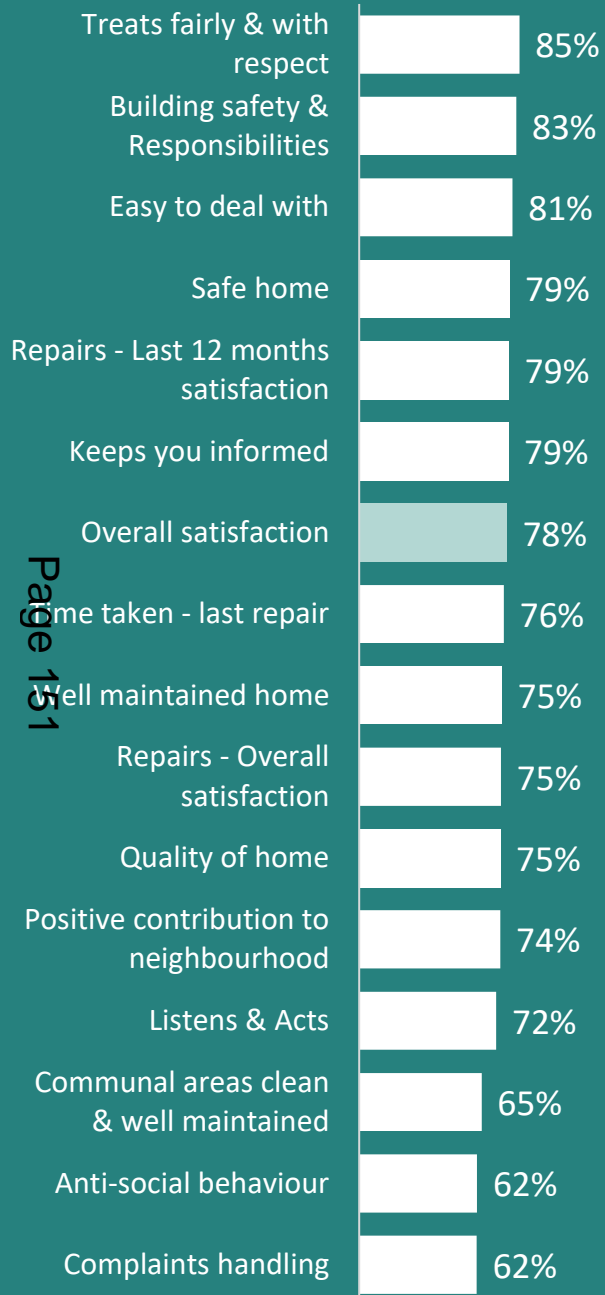
Could play some of the residents' calls to them?

## Contact centre - Hot Topics

Outstanding / forgotten repairs	88
Timescales to complete repairs	77
Return call / email	66
Care, empathy, support etc	43
Appointments	42
Time taken to resolve enquiry	42
Answering phones	28
Communication about repair (before started)	27
Staff knowledge / turnover	26
Call/contact handling - passed around	22
Communications (in general)	22
Attitude of staff	20
Keep informed of repair progress	17
Quality of work	16
Resolving problems	16
Damp / mould / condensation	16
Had to report repair multiple times	13
Anti-social behaviour	13
Contractor communications	12
Listen carefully, take interest	12
Move, transfer	12
Ease of reporting repair	11
Tree maintenance	11
Neutral comment	11
Understanding Residents Circumstances	10
CBL system	10

# Transactional Surveys

- ❖ **Housing Options** – Lower scores than the previous year across all areas of service and high levels of dissatisfaction. Comments include a mixture of positive comments, improvements to customer service/communications and recognition of the housing shortage. A review of comments might prove helpful.
- ❖ **ASB** – Improving service, ratings between 56% and 73%, many of the comments are positive or have no suggestions on how services can be improved. A review of comments might prove helpful.
- ❖ **Complaints** – Improving service, most ratings up on the previous year, lowest scores for the final outcome of complaint (expected) and assistance to make a complaint. Most of the comments are linked to poor customer service and especially poor communications – keeping tenants informed. This suggests some review of service in this area may be needed.



# Conclusion

**Transactional surveys** – covered in previous slides

## Perception TSM survey

- ❖ **Good news** – Some high levels of satisfaction, increasing satisfaction in some areas (against national trends) and strong performance with other landlords.
- ❖ **Key Driver analysis** – key driver analysis reveals the strong influence of the quality of the home, followed by the repairs and maintenance service and SCH being easy to deal with / listening to views. Need to understand why one in six tenants are dissatisfied in these areas? And if anything can be done?
- ❖ **Voice of the Customer** – Residents' comments. A recurring theme is the repairs service, in particular the timescales for work to be completed and dealing with outstanding repairs. As well as, communications – which has seen a fall in satisfaction with the contact centre in the transactional survey.

## Next steps?

➤ SCH?

- Page 152
- Review survey findings and VOC in key service areas
  - Reach out if need support to do this
  - Optimise questions in 2023-24 TSM and transactional surveys

# Recommendations



### Home & Repairs

Key drivers of overall satisfaction. Dissatisfied tenants talked about dealing with outstanding repairs and the timescales to complete repairs top the list. PR is needed for repairs as perception is much lower than reality.



### Communications and contact centre

Communications and customer service are linked to dissatisfaction with listening to views and are often connected to repairs. Ratings for the contact centre are lower than in the previous year. Staffing issues/service pressures? Analysis of VOC may prove useful.



### Communal areas

Lower levels of satisfaction with how communal areas are kept clean and well maintained, with many of tenants dissatisfied. When dissatisfied tenants were asked to give further comments on this, they referred to the frequency and quality of the cleaning service, as well as some issues around the grounds maintenance service. Whilst some also have problems with the security of the communal areas.



### Survey changes

Improve probing – consider moving the current two probes. Overall services probe VS – why? VD why? FS/N/FD – what can SCH do that would improve your score?  
Adding questions – Q1 and Q2 asked to add “CH manage your home on behalf of the council. “What is most important to you in relation to your home and the housing services SCH deliver to you? Cost of living crisis – residents who said they are struggling financially consistently awarded lower ratings across all metrics (5% to 15% lower). Could also explore other current issues, such as damp and energy efficiency.





# 78%

## Overall Satisfaction

The results from the surveys during 2022/23 show very good levels of satisfaction with the services provided by SCH.

In 2022/23, 78% of tenants are satisfied with the overall services provided, whilst just 11% are dissatisfied. This result sits broadly in the middle of the range of measures, with the highest satisfaction for tenants being treated fairly and with respect (85%), the information provided about building safety (83%) and SCH being easy to deal with (81%). However, some measures recorded satisfaction levels below 70%: the cleaning and maintenance of the communal areas (65%) and the handling of anti-social behaviour and complaints (both 62%).

Key driver analysis also found that the quality of the home has the biggest influence on overall satisfaction with the services provided.

# Key Metrics Summary – 2022-23



**75%** Quality of home



**75%** Well maintained home



**79%** Safe home



**79%** Repairs - Last 12 months satisfaction



**76%** Time taken - last repair



**75%** Repairs - Overall satisfaction



**65%** Communal areas clean & well maintained



**83%** Building safety & Responsibilities



**74%** Positive contribution to neighbourhood



**62%** Anti-social behaviour



**81%** Easy to deal with



**72%** Listens & Acts



**79%** Keeps you informed



**85%** Treats fairly & with respect



**62%** Complaints handling

For further information please  
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07712 891656



## AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2023 at 10.30am

### MINUTES

Present: Mark Thrasher, Dave Pinwell

Officers: Fiona Hughes, Martyn Sargeant, Jahnavi Jagadish, Karen Cranley, Jatinder Matharu, Carol Trappett, Colin Hudson, Mary Moroney, Barbara Griffiths (Minutes)

Apologies: Bernie Donnelly, Sam Gilbert, Darren Baggs, Nigel Page, Mark Wills, Saroj Pal, Anna Spencer-Gray

#### 1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting.

#### 2. ADMISSION OF LATE PAPERS

There were no late papers.

#### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No new declarations of interest were declared.

#### 4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2022 AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 12 December 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

##### DECISION

##### THE COMMITTEE

(i) **APPROVED**

the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 12 December 2022

#### 5. ACTION LOG - NOTING

The action log was noted.

##### DECISION

##### THE COMMITTEE

(i) **APPROVED**

the Action Log.

## **6. EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN**

Karen Cranley introduced the report, which is the standard audit report. She confirmed that herself, Sam Gilbert, Tony Higgins and Anna Spencer-Gray from RSM had met on 14 February to discuss the plan and drew members' attention to minor things to note. As the accounting system changed mid-year, two sample sets will be undertaken. The focus being on the new system as there is relative confidence in the old system having been audited and used for many years. Page 15 outlines the main deadlines, deadline for accounts to be closed 8 May, a meeting is scheduled with the auditors on 6 June and the draft deadline for the final report to come to this Committee is 12 June 2023 and changes or slippage will be conveyed to the Committee.

Main risks are identified on page 17 of the pack, an additional item for the audit this year is the compliance for Corporation Tax.

Questions /comments arising:

**Q. ISA315 puts more significant level of emphasis on IT, with changes in IT systems the audit team will need to look at pre change and post change transactions, does this imply a level of risk around potential increases in the cost of the audit?**

**A.** Not specifically, we have had a discussion with RSM around the significant changes at our meeting in February, there is an extra £2k of additional costs. I can go back to them to ensure there are no hidden fees and come back to you.

**C. The fee has gone up considerably but as there is a lack of competition within the sector there is little we can do in mitigation.**

**A.** The increase has been scrutinised and questioned and was discounted as a result of those discussions.

**Action:** Committee members voiced concerns over the tight deadline and wanted to be made aware as soon as possible if there are likely to be any delays.

**DECISION                      THE COMMITTEE**

**(i) NOTED**    the External Audit Plan

## **7. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT AND AUDIT REPORTS**

Colin ran through the high-lights of the report, confirming that the team had completed two audits both at level 3 for the Wellbeing Service and Homeless Service. Core financial systems audits are progressing well and on track to be completed on time. Colin confirmed that due to the change in the financial systems audit testing will take place on both EBIS and on Oracle Cloud. In terms of counter-fraud work, eight properties have been recovered with a value

## **AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2023 at 10.30am**

of around £744k, linking back to the audit report for the Homeless Service, work is being developed for the audit investigations team to support homeless investigations. Finally, the Counter Fraud Statement and Policy have been updated and approved by the SMBC Governance Committee. Fraud risk assessments will be refreshed from April.

Questions and comments arising from presentation:

**Q. The plan seems to be loaded to the end of the year are those audits in progress or completed? Do we circulate those reports when they are finalised?**

**A.** Those will be in progress and will be included in the next report, we only report on audits that have been rated as Level 3 or below although we could circulate those if required.

**Action:** It was agreed that those completed audits scoring 3 or below would be circulated prior to the July meeting.

**Q. Are we looking to improve the audits from Level 3?**

**A.** SCH have mirrored the Council's processes, audits above level 3 are not referred to their Audit Committee. There is a difficult balance in terms of ensuring staff welcome audits and the learning from them and as CEO I want to foster a culture of acceptance. We have also moved away from the automatic follow up of audits at level 3 to free up audit colleagues to focus on other areas. Of course, the aspiration is for level 2 audits and ELT scrutinised action plans associated with level 3 audits.

**C. Dave Pinwell would like to know more about the wellbeing service, commenting that there appeared to be a good understanding of mitigating actions and wondered if we needed a different marketing approach to entice people into the service.**

**A.** We are aware of the potential for Adult Social Care to refer customers into our service, they are working with around 6k adults but only 150 of those are benefiting from our Wellbeing service, it is an obvious group for them to want to target in terms of providing cost savings to their service. However, we have 1200 private clients in comparison. We have set up monthly meetings with ASC colleagues to improve our reach into potential markets. There are two recommendations including setting a financially accurate budget that is realistic.

**Q. In terms of the homeless service level 3 rating are there any specific concerns around that?**

**A.** The main theme from that audit was the lack of accurate record keeping, the team were under considerable pressure with increased presentations. Our audit colleagues will continue to check individual record keeping. The team have seen a period of uncertainty in terms of staff changes and use of agency staff, we have developed a quality assurance framework including cases being

## AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2023 at 10.30am

audited and deadline and action trackers. We are currently beginning a review of the Housing Options service and we will look to review and build in new processes and make targets more realistic.

Colin commented that historically the majority of SCH's audits came out at level one or two. The core financial systems remain at level 1 and 2.

### DECISION

### THE COMMITTEE

#### (i) NOTED

the work of Internal Audit and reviewed this information, identifying any areas where the Audit Committee wishes to receive further information or explanation from Internal Audit and/or management.

## 8. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

Colin introduced the report setting out the outline plan for next year. The plan is driven by the audit universe and updated month by month. Next year core financial systems will be included and a review of SCH's 5-year plan alongside changes in legislation. Damp and Mould and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis will also feature. Cyber related security is a national risk and something for auditors to consider. Colin asked Committee members if there was anything specific, they felt was missing from the proposals in the report.

Questions/Comments arising:

**C. Increased regulation next year will see consumer standards satisfaction measures will become applicable. I have had discussions with Mary Morrissey and are considering what joint audits we might want to commission around our shared responsibilities. The Council, as the landlord, will need assurance arrangements across both the Council and SCH.**

C. The Chair confirmed the Committee would want to see a framework for monitoring and assurance, damp and mould is very important and something specific around that might be intertwined with standards.

Action: Chair and Saroj to meet to discuss before meeting in July.

### DECISION

### THE COMMITTEE

#### (i) NOTED

the contents of the report

## 9. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER UPDATE

Jahnavi introduced the report, drawing members' attention to section four, items to note. Cyber security and business continuity resilience is a key area for

## AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2023 at 10.30am

consideration. A new amber risk around safeguarding has been added to the register, SCH have a strong and robust response and are in the process of recruiting a Community Safety Manager. Further information is available within appendix D. 4.3 ELT have identified the need for an additional operational risk around damp and mould particularly around the increase in reports and capacity to be able to deal with those against a backdrop of increased regulation.

Questions/Comments arising:

### **C. The internal audit plan should be linked to the risk register. What is the general awareness of suspicious communications?**

**A.** Work around cyber security is happening with SMBC, and we are waiting for that before SCH consider what they need to do. There has been lots of work carried out in the background with phishing tests. SMBC resilience forum started including SCH and we will review our ways of working if required. An exercise has recently been run across SMBC and SCH with spoof email being sent to test the staff responses. 20% of all staff clicked the link but only 5% began to enter data, that was encouraging, it would take only one person to compromise the network.

**Action:** Fiona Hughes asked Colin to review the scope of the wider audit to understand the assurance for SCH.

**Action:** Chair suggested a possible away day for Board members to consider the growing pressure on reserves and cyber risk.

### **DECISION                      THE COMMITTEE**

<b>(i) NOTED</b>	the current position in relation to identified corporate risks and if it is felt appropriate, comment on any additional risks or mitigating factors that should be reflected in the Corporate Risk Register
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## **10. PROPOSAL FOR SETTING SCH RISK APPETITE**

Jahnavi introduced the report, setting out the reasons for the proposals being to align our policies and procedures with the Council. Jahnavi drew members' attention to the information contained within section 4 of the report and confirmed that further proposals will be brought back to the Board in October 2023. Appendices provided detail of the scale used by SMBC. The Chair commented that he is mindful of the need for these proposals to be something the Board can refer back to when big decisions are required but did not want the process to become too time consuming.

## AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2023 at 10.30am

**Action:** It was agreed that the Chair will meet with the team to discuss the proposals

### DECISION

### THE COMMITTEE

#### (i) NOTED

the proposed process and timeline in relation to undertaking the current risk appetite and setting of the organisation's risk appetite.

#### (ii) APPROVED

the proposed process if satisfied that it will meet the organisation's needs and if it is felt appropriate, recommend any additional factors that should be reflected in the appetite setting process.

## 11. PROCUREMENT OF ONESCH SOLUTION

Martyn introduced the report to update members on the progress of the OneSCH project. Following concerns about the pace of the programme options to accelerate progress were identified and we are now at the stage of sharing the tender specification with the Committee. Sharing of the document is to provide a level of assurance to the Committee, Martyn confirmed that he has a draft quality specification if members would like to see it.

In terms of the programme team, Jatinder confirmed that recruitment of Business Process Manager and Project Officer are underway. The procurement process is two months ahead of schedule.

Questions/Comments arising:

**C. Where does the demonstration of systems come within the procurement process, it might be better for that to be earlier within the process to weed out suppliers who are unsuitable. System demonstrations will help cut the time around tender evaluations.**

**A.** We will be guided by our procurement colleagues, every aspect will be justified and have an audit trail. We are concerned at the number of organisations who register an interest but may not be suitable. The first stage is to discourage people who will not have a genuine solution for us. We will outline what we require which is fairly standard for public procurement.

**C. It is pleasing to see the process shortened it will be interesting to see who puts themselves forward.**

### DECISION

### THE COMMITTEE

#### (i) NOTED

the intention to move to the procurement phase of the programme



## **AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2023 at 10.30am**

**(ii) NOTED**

that the procurement timetable has been accelerated by two months.

### **12. FORWARD PLAN**

Audit Plan to be added to the 3 July meeting and only a brief update required for OneSCH programme.

Forward plan was agreed by the Committee.

#### **DECISION**

#### **THE COMMITTEE**

**(i) NOTED**

content of the Forward Plan.

### **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no new business

### **14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 3 JULY 2023 @10.30am**

Meeting concluded 11.50

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## **SCH: BUILDING SAFETY TASK & FINISH GROUP - 17 April 2023**

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Richard Hyde (Chair), Phil Hardy, Nigel Page, Mark Thrasher and Bernie Donnelly

**Officers:** Fiona Hughes, Chief Executive  
Martyn Sargeant, Executive Director - Customer Service, Transformation and Business Support  
Darren Baggs, Executive Director - Operations  
Mike Brymer, Head of Asset Management and Development  
Mark Wills, Health, Safety & Risk Manager  
Alison Clark-Williams, Head of Building Safety  
Mary Morrissey, Director for Economy & Infrastructure  
Sarah Brookes, Business Support Manager

#### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no new declarations of interest.

#### **3. LATE PAPERS**

There were no late papers.

#### **4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2023**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved by the Group.

#### **5. ACTION LOG**

Alison Clark-Williams, Head of Building Safety, provided an update on two outstanding actions:

- 0123-1: West Midlands Fire Service has been requested to review the Building Safety Plan and provide external assurance and this will be made available with future versions of the composite report.
- 0123-2: criteria for self-referral covered under item 8 on the agenda.
- 0123-3/0123-4: actioned.

#### **6. POLICY OR LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Richard Hyde, Chair, noted that this report would not be considered separately as it formed part of the wider composite report (item 7).

## **7. COMPOSITE BUILDING SAFETY REPORT**

Alison Clark-Williams presented the composite building safety report for the year to the end of March 2023.

Mark Wills, Health, Safety and Risk Manager, provided an update on legislative matters. He particularly noted:

- The strengthening of accountability arrangements in respect of the Council's role and the Council's Director of Economy and Infrastructure acting as the Principal Accountable Person.
- The introduction of new competency standards for those involved in managing building safety.
- The introduction of a 'best endeavours' approach by the HSE in relation to engaging residents on checking entrance doors.
- The Fire Sector Federation establishing benchmark standards for fire risk assessors.

Mark Thrasher queried the status of leaseholders regarding fire safety, and how The Board is sighted. Alison Clark-Williams explained that it would be helpful to have secondary legislation to clarify the extent of powers but further work was needed to define SCH's approach.

**ACTION:** develop SCH's position and approach in relation fire safety and leaseholders (Alison Clark-Williams).

Alison Clark-Williams provided updates further to the report's publication:

- Registration with the Building Regulator has now opened and SCH has until September to register all high-rise buildings.
- Two contractors are working on fire door inspections. Phase 1 (communal doors) is 55% complete and is due for completion by 22 April, at which point phase 2 (flat entrance doors) will commence.
- There has been a particular focus on reducing the number of outstanding fire remediation actions, which are down by about 20% compared with the previous reporting period (but with just over 400 remaining outstanding).

Mary Morrissey queried follow-on work undertaken by Dodds. Alison Clark-Williams confirmed this only applies to minor works arising that can be completed whilst on site.

Bernadette Donnelly queried the reliability of door security arrangements. Michael Brymer, Head of Asset Management and Development, advised the previous manufacturer had gone out of business, which had complicated identifying a solution with the new supplier. Consultation had been undertaken block by block with residents to agree temporary arrangements pending a long term solution. New units are being provided and the replacement programme is underway.

Nigel Page queried the incoming requirement for social housing managers to be suitably qualified. Fiona Hughes confirmed this was part of the government's

## **SCH: BUILDING SAFETY TASK & FINISH GROUP - 17 April 2023**

drive to professionalise the sector and raise standards, although further detail was awaited. SCH has begun a baseline assessment to understand the current picture.

Phil Hardy asked that future reports indicate when remedial programmes of work are due to complete rather than start and, where something is out of compliance, the report indicate how long that has been the case.

**ACTION:** amend future reports to show when remedial work is due to complete and indicate periods of non-compliance (Alison Clark-Williams).

Fiona Hughes, Chief Executive, confirmed that the Executive Leadership Team has arrangements in place for the regular monitoring of compliance and building safety activity.

Alison Clark-Williams noted continued incremental improvement in respect of both gas and electrical safety compliance. She emphasised that the one high-rise property out of gas compliance had now been resolved.

She noted that the 'Make it Right' campaign had resulted in increased reporting of damp and mould issues and a corresponding increase in rectification work.

Phil Hardy requested data on the average time taken to respond to damp and mould issues.

**ACTION:** provide data on response times for damp and mould cases (Mike Brymer).

Mark Thrasher noted the relatively high number of fire log activations and asked how this was addressed. Alison Clark-Williams agreed to check whether West Midlands Fire Service makes a charge for unnecessary callouts but confirmed activations were reviewed regularly to assess trends and highlight any issues.

**ACTION:** confirm whether WMFS makes a charge for unjustified callouts (Alison Clark-Williams).

The Group agreed to note the report.

### **8. CRITERIA FOR TRIGGERING SELF REFERRAL TO REGULATOR**

Alison Clark-Williams explained that, further to the Group's discussion at its previous meeting, initial work had been undertaken to consider what reasons might trigger a self-referral to the Regulator. She advised that there are no set criteria, so the focus is on what the Regulator would assess, particularly considering the severity and extent of the issue.

Richard Hyde noted there is to be a discussion with the Council about this issue that can then be reported back to the Group.

## **SCH: BUILDING SAFETY TASK & FINISH GROUP - 17 April 2023**

Phil Hardy noted that the 'serious detriment' test will be removed once the new Building Safety Act is in place. He suggested it would be worth testing some scenarios.

The Group discussed the reputational risks of self-referring. Phil Hardy advised that, for regulated providers, where the regime has been in place for some time, self-referral is viewed positively by the Regulator as an indication of good systems and practice.

### **9. FORWARD PLAN**

The Group agreed that there would not be a separate legislative and policy update at future meetings, as this would be covered by the composite report.

### **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

DB advised the Group that a fire had occurred in an SCH property on 13 April, which had resulted in a fatality. He explained that West Midlands Fire Service was investigating but initial analysis indicated that the fire may have arisen due to smoking in bed.

### **11. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: 10 JULY 2023 AT 4.30 PM**

Mark Thrasher noted his apologies for the meeting on 10 July.

## **SCH: HUMAN RESOURCES, EQUALITIES AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE - 24 April 2023**

### **MINUTES**

Present: Louise Tubbs (Chair), Richard Hyde, April Halpin, Nigel Page

Officers: Fiona Hughes, Darren Baggs, Emma Birch, Karen Grant, Niku Mawby, Martyn Sargeant, Sarah Brookes (minutes)

Apologies: None

#### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed all members and officers to the meeting.

#### **2. ADMISSION OF LATE PAPERS**

There were no late papers.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no new declarations of interest.

#### **4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2023 AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendments:

- Action log item 0720-5: the date should have read '**22.3.23**'
- Forward plan item People Strategy Priorities Update: the date should have read '**2023/24**'

#### **5. ACTION LOG**

Emma Birch, HR Business Lead, provided an update:

0720-5: Brenda Gallagher is working with SMBC and the deadline for completion of the revised domestic abuse policy is June 2023.

1022-1: actioned and included within the Employee Wellbeing update (item 7 of this agenda).

1022-2: action carried forward to the next meeting due to a lack of data from the new Oracle system. This is being addressed as an urgent matter within SMBC.

1022-3: actioned and included within the Equalities update (item 8 of this agenda).

1022-4: actioned.

## **SCH: HUMAN RESOURCES, EQUALITIES AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE - 24 April 2023**

### **6. PEOPLE STRATEGY PRIORITIES FOR 2023/24**

Martyn Sargeant presented the People Strategy Priorities 2023-24. There were several red BRAG ratings and Martyn explained that progress has been hindered by management of change processes and the absence of an organisational development resource. The resourcing issue has been addressed through the restructure, which has progressed to recruitment. These items will be carried forward and progressed during 2023-24.

Following a refresh of the Staff Engagement Group (SEG), Martyn acknowledged the fantastic progress of the group, particularly noting its work to ensure the success of the staff conference and implementing other initiatives around employee wellbeing.

Richard Hyde asked if the conference would have a positive impact on staff wellbeing. Martyn confirmed that wellbeing related issues will continue to be a challenge however progress is being made and the Fika platform supports this initiative.

It was agreed that the next staff conference is likely to be held in approximately 18 months, subject to cost. Fiona Hughes, Chief Executive, confirmed that alternative options will be considered for wider engagement with staff.

Richard Hyde would like thanks to be passed onto the staff involved with the conference and acknowledged the hard work to achieve the outcomes of the day.

### **7. EMPLOYEE WELLBEING UPDATE**

Emma Birch confirmed that due to the introduction of the new Oracle system the absence data provided within the report is only up until 31 December 2022.

Emma Birch confirmed that HR have been reviewing the absences with managers using alternative methods.

The interim chief executive of SMBC has raised the lack of absence data with the council's Head of HR. We await further information.

Nigel Page queried the proportion of sickness absence attributed to leavers. Emma Birch explained this was absence taken by people no longer employed at SCH but included in the report.

April Halpin asked about the sickness absence triggers. Emma talked through the triggers and confirmed that patterns of sickness absence are also reviewed under the policy.

Nigel Page referred to appendix a 'how SCH compares to other local organisations in regard to the employment offer' and requested more information about pension contributions. Nigel also noted that there was no



## **SCH: HUMAN RESOURCES, EQUALITIES AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE - 24 April 2023**

detailed information relating to flexi time or pay and explained that he would like to understand what SCH does well in terms of the employee offer and how it compares to other comparable organisations.

**ACTION:** update the document with additional information (Emma Birch).

Nigel Page questioned if other social landlords are experiencing the same recruitment struggles as SCH. Emma was able to confirm that recruitment is an issue across the whole sector.

### **8. EQUALITIES UPDATE: BOARD DIVERSITY AND ACTION PLAN PROGRESS**

Niku Mawby, Equality and Diversity Officer, presented the progress against the equality, diversity and inclusion action plan for 2022-2024.

Richard Hyde explained that SCH needs to strengthen the diversity of the Board and representation needs to be in accordance with the interests and views of our communities.

Niku identified that Board vacancies could benefit from targeted marketing such as the Housing Diversity Network and this may help SCH to be more inclusive and diverse. New ways of working should also encourage people from anywhere to join our Board.

Richard Hyde identified that a new Chair of the Board will need to be advertised in 2024 and this would also provide an opportunity to advertise more widely and potentially strengthen the Board's diversity.

Nigel Page noted the difference between Solihull's diversity data and that of SCH's customers. He queried how SCH would know when appropriate representation has been achieved. Karen Grant, Head of Equality and Diversity, explained that we need to ensure that SCH give all groups the opportunity to provide their views and opinions and enable diverse voices to shape and improve services. This will allow for more insight to understand the experience of different customer groups that can be used for service improvements.

Richard Hyde confirmed that we need to ensure that the company culture of SCH 'lives and breathes' equality, diversity and inclusion and that it runs through everything we do. The Board should continue to reflect this in the work that it undertakes.

**9. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY AND GENDER PAY GAP REPORT**

Karen Grant presented the Public Sector Equality Duty and Gender Pay Gap reports. She confirmed both reports have been published on SCH's website and the gender pay gap report has been uploaded on the government's portal.

Martyn Sargeant highlighted that SCH is making steady but slow progress towards closing the gender pay gap.

Nigel Page challenged that the reports are not in plain language and asked for this to be reviewed to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of audiences and in accordance with the subject matter.

Karen Grant noted this request and agreed that the right balance needs to be reached to ensure compliance with the requirements of the legislation and the audience of the report.

**ACTION:** review approach to the Public Sector Equality Duty report  
(Martyn Sargeant/Niku Mawby).

**10. BOARD APPRAISALS UPDATE**

The Committee approved the proposed arrangements for appraisals to be carried out in 2023.

It was agreed that Louise Tubbs and Nigel Page will conduct the appraisal of the Chair of the Board. This will be undertaken by 31 July 2023.

**Action:** make arrangements for Board appraisals  
(Martyn Sargeant/Sarah Brookes)

**11. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee agreed that it would not receive copies of the HR data as a matter of course in future.

**12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Louise Tubbs thanked Mary Moroney for her hard work and dedication to SCH and the Board and wished her a happy retirement.

**13. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Monday 16 October 2023 at 4.30pm

**SCH: HUMAN RESOURCES, EQUALITIES AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE -  
24 April 2023**

**Signed by Chair of Committee: .....**

**Date: .....**

5.20 pm

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## SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING 22<sup>nd</sup> MAY 2023

### REPORT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICE TRANSFORMATION AND BUSINESS SUPPORT

#### PERFORMANCE UPDATE

##### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To give an update on performance at year-end 2022/23 (Q4) where targets have not been met.

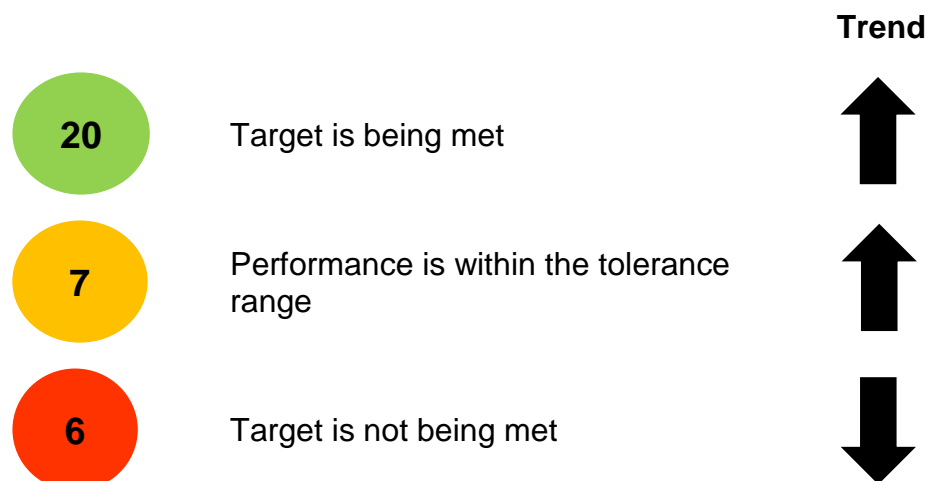
##### 2. Recommendation – Items for Noting / Approval

- 2.1 Board is recommended to:

- (i) **NOTE** those indicators, and the associated narrative, where the target performance has not been achieved.

##### 3. Performance Summary

- 3.1 At year-end 2022/23 there were 33 KPIs (previously there were 34, but the staff sickness indicator has been removed as the data has not been available for the last six months due to the Oracle Cloud upgrade). In summary, performance was:



- 3.2 Improvements have been made against:

- WR15 - current tenant arrears. This has outturned as amber following a reduction in arrears of £312k over the rent-free week.
- NS9 - percentage of flatted blocks passing cleaning inspection. There has been a significant increase in this indicator over the last

quarter. Although the year end position is amber, the last three months have been above the target.

- AM1a - percentage of properties with a valid gas certificate. Upward trend noted over the last four months. As of 12th April, there were three outstanding properties.
- AM19 - repairs satisfaction (perception) – consistent scores over target for the last 11 months.

#### **4. Performance Exceptions**

- 4.1** There were six red indicators at end of Q3, an improved position compared to the previous month. There were a further seven off target but within tolerance, down from nine at the end of Q3. The red issues were:

**4.2 WB20 - customers supported with independence to remain in home**

Some work was undertaken partway through the year to adjust the sample to exclude residents with a dementia flag where they wouldn't have the capacity to respond to a survey. This has had an impact on the overall score for this year.

A deep dive of the data shows that the majority of reasons why residents don't feel supported to remain in their home do not relate to the wellbeing service, but encompass wider issues such as the neighbourhood, their particular frailty or services provided by other agencies externally.

We will be working with Acuity to make the questions more specific to the wellbeing services so we can monitor this indicator more effectively.

**4.3 AM1a - percentage of properties with valid gas certificate**

At the end of March, there were five properties without a valid gas certificate. As at 12<sup>th</sup> May 2023, there were three properties without a valid gas certificate.

Two relate to low rise properties and one relates to a house. The oldest date relates to June 2022, where legal proceedings are ongoing (house). Of the 2 low rise flats, one gas certificate expired at the end of March 2023 and Neighbourhood Services (NS) are taking action (legal proceedings pending), and the second expired on 6th April 2023 and NS are involved to gain access.

**4.4 AM20 - average number of days to complete repairs**

The Service has experienced high volumes of enquiries during the final six months of the year, especially with the increased enquiries regarding to damp and mould. The repairs service has received a data quality review by HouseMark during the year. As a result of the findings, historical Insight Reports have been reviewed and working

practice have been reviewed to ensure that repair works are marked as completed until the repair has been fixed. Further analysis has also been carried out on the number of works that are in progress at any one time. The analysis has taken historical information from the Dynamic Resource Scheduling System (DRS) dating back to 2017. This has shown a historical trend that there is a higher volume of works in progress than would usually be expected. Further work will need to be carried out over the next 12 months on analysing the drivers for this position e.g. inaccurate data entry, interfacing issues, housekeeping, productivity, operational working practices etc. Despite this position, transactional satisfaction with the service has remained high for the previous 12 months.

#### **4.5 VL13 - percentage of rent loss due to voids**

Year-end figure was 1.63%. When properties approved for demolition and repurposing are removed (Kingham, Greenhill Way, Lakeside and Castle Lane), rent loss due to voids reduces to 1.07%. From Quarter 1 2023/4 these properties will be removed from the calculation. It should also be noted that the average number of voids has also decreased in Q4.

#### **4.6 NS38 - harm reduction resulting from ASB intervention**

This indicator is derived from customer feedback where we ask 'has your situation improved' as a result of the ASB intervention. The low number of responses involved make it difficult to draw conclusions.

However, the annual figures are based on 56 responses, and indicate that just over 56% of respondents felt that their situation had improved. The majority of comments state that the resident felt the situation had not been resolved, or they were unaware of what action had been taken.

For context, for the 12-month period, 71% of residents were satisfied with the overall service provided

#### **4.7 HO3a - average stay (families with children) in budget hotels**

Yearly outturn of 35 days is above the target number of days (15). There has been an additional 500+ approaches to the Housing Options Service in 2022/23.

This is largely attributable to the impact of the Ukrainian war, domestic abuse and the end of private rented sector tenancies. This has had an impact on the demand for temporary and secure accommodation, resulting in an increased reliance on hotels and extended stays for those requiring the accommodation.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific cost implications arising from this information report. The costs of delivering services are covered by the annual budget setting process.

## **6. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

## **7 Risk Management Implications**

- 7.1 The risks arising from failing to meet specific targets such as not collecting income are included within the general risk management framework.

## **8 Value for Money and Efficiency Considerations/Implications**

- 8.1 The expectation of SMBC is that SCH continues to deliver excellent services whilst delivering efficiencies.

## **9 Tenant Involvement/Consultation**

- 9.1 There has been no specific consultation in relation to this report; however, the SCHAPE panel will consider the summary of performance.

## **10 Consistent with Strategic Vision**

- 10.1 The report is consistent with the refreshed strategic vision for 2020 to 2025.

## **REPORT AUTHOR:**

Becci Youlden - Head of Customer Experience  
0121 779 8846  
becciyoulden@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Date produced – 10 March 2023

## Full Board Forward Plan

Monday 22 May 2023			
		Quarter 4 2022/23 Performance Exception Report	Martyn Sargeant
		Quarter 4 2022/23 Health and Safety Report	Mark Wills
		Chair's Report from Human Resources, Equalities and Remuneration Committee on 24 April 2023	Louise Tubbs
		Chair's Report from Housing Operations Committee on 22 May 2023	Phil Hardy
		Chair's Report from Audit and Risk Committee on 20 March 2023	Mark Thrasher
		Chair's Report from Building Safety Task & Finish Group Meeting held on 17 April 2023	Richard Hyde
		Preparations for Regulatory Compliance	Martyn Sargeant
		Annual Governance Review incorporating Standing Orders Amendments and Attendance	Martyn Sargeant
Monday 4 September 2023			
		Quarter 1 2023/24 Performance Exception Report	Martyn Sargeant
		Quarter 1 2023/24 Health and Safety Report	Mark Wills
		Quarter 4 2022/23 Financial Outturn	Sam Gilbert
		Quarter 1 2023/24 Financial Monitoring	Sam Gilbert
		Chair's Report from Audit and Risk Committee on 19 June and 25 September 2023 (including signing of accounts)	Mark Thrasher
		Chair's Report from Housing Operations Committee on 4 September 2023	Phil Hardy
		Chair's Report from Human Resources, Equalities and Remuneration Committee on 17 July 2023	Louise Tubbs
		Budget 2024/25	Sam Gilbert
Monday 20 November 2023 AGM			
		Quarter 2 2023/24 Performance Exception Report	Martyn Sargeant
		Quarter 2 2023/24 Health and Safety Report	Mark Wills
		Quarter 2 2023/24 Financial Monitoring	Sam Gilbert
		Chair's Report from Housing Operations Committee on 27 November 2023	Phil Hardy
		Chair's Report from Human Resources, Equalities and Remuneration Committee on 17 October 2023	TBA
		Draft Delivery Plan 2024	Martyn Sargeant
		HRA Budget 2024/25	Sam Gilbert
		Annual Review of Compliance against NHF Code of Governance	Martyn Sargeant

**Regular Items (every meeting):**

- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- Action Log
- Chairs' reports from Committee Meetings

**Quarterly Reports:**

- Performance (Exception Reporting)
- Financial Monitoring
- Health & Safety Report (including data on accidents)