

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date **11 July 2024**

Report of: **Director of Housing**

Subject: **Housing Consumer Standards Update**

SUMMARY

As a Registered Provider of social housing, Fareham Borough Council must now comply with new Consumer Standards which came into force in April 2024. The standards introduce a co-regulatory approach with the Regulator of Social Housing, intended to achieve compliance with a set of specific expectations around the safety and quality of homes, transparency and influence for customers, safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods, and a tenancy standard.

An Action Plan for Fareham Housing has been developed, with the objective to achieve confident compliance with the new Standards.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel: -

- (a) agrees the content of the draft Action Plan at Appendix A;
- (b) notes that the Action Plan will be an iterative document, to be kept up to date and relevant by the Director of Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing; and
- (c) provides any comments or observations for referral to the Executive.

INTRODUCTION

1. On 01 April 2024 new Consumer Standards for social housing providers came into force. The new standards are intended to protect tenants and to drive improvement in the services that social landlords provide. The new standards will apply to Fareham Housing and all other Registered Providers nationally.
2. Through changes in legislation, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) (the Regulator) will undertake inspections and have stronger enforcement powers to make social housing providers address issues.
3. On 08 February 2024 the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered a report which (a) outlined the draft new standards; (b) explained the anticipated inspection regime by the Regulator; (c) provided an assessment of current performance against the draft standards; and (d) identified initial actions to improve compliance.
4. As part of the recommendations agreed by the Housing Scrutiny Panel in February 2024 a further report would be provided to the Council's Executive in 2024 (once the standards had been confirmed), and an Action Plan would be developed and reported to a future Housing Scrutiny Panel.
5. This report seeks agreement to the Action Plan (which incorporates more detail on the intended assurance/governance approach) ahead of Executive consideration on 15 July 2024.

THE ACTION PLAN

6. An Action Plan, intended to achieve confident compliance with the new Housing Consumer Standards, has now been developed. This is provided at Appendix A.
7. The draft Action Plan includes: -
 - Objective
 - Background
 - Summary of the Consumer Standards
 - Self-Assessment position in February 2024 (against the then draft standards)
 - Inspections and Results (the process of)
 - Governance and Assurance
 - Actions (including general actions, specific actions, and governance, assurance, and monitoring actions).
8. The Action Plan is intended to be an iterative document that will record progress against actions, where actions have been completed, and have additional actions added when necessary.
9. Through informal discussion with the Regulator, Officers have been advised that a key part of their inspection process will be looking for landlords to demonstrate that they have an awareness of where there are gaps that need to be filled, and improvements that need to be made. In this respect the Action Plan at Appendix A (and the RAG rating self-assessment referred to in the Action Plan and included at Appendix B) are key to demonstrating this and providing a framework for on-going action and

improvement.

10. The Action Plan is designed to be an iterative document, which would be initially approved by the Council's Executive, and thereafter regularly updated by the Director of Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing.

THE WORK AHEAD

11. As can be seen from the Action Plan at Appendix A there are several specific actions that will be taken forward. These are intended to clearly demonstrate compliance against the new standards. Several of these actions include policy and strategy development.
12. Although staffing has been restructured in the Housing team to help address these actions, it will not be possible to deliver on all the actions in 2024/25. Some actions are anticipated to be delivered in 2025/26 (with indicative timetables for some workstreams still to be developed). Officers have prioritised those actions for 2024/25 that are deemed to be more significant or pressing as part of demonstrating compliance with the standards.
13. Table 4 of the Action Plan at Appendix A articulates the governance, assurance and monitoring actions that are anticipated. This includes Member involvement through Executive Member briefings and several annual reports to be provided to the Housing Scrutiny Panel. The outcome of any formal inspections of Fareham Housing by the Regulator will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.
14. In the case of Local Authority Registered Providers (such as Fareham Housing) the Regulator expects Councillors to be responsible for the delivery of the outcomes of the standards. The governance proposed at Table 4 of the Action Plan is therefore intended to allow Councillors the opportunity and format to oversee and review progress, and to hold Officers and the Executive Member of Housing to account.

ANTICIPATED PROGRESS IN THE SHORT TERM

15. Figure 1 below shows the internal RAG rating assessment at the end of February 2024. Figure 2 shows the anticipated RAG rating assessment at the end of September 2024 should the identified actions up to and including September be achieved.

RAG rating for 'confident compliance'
(February 2024)

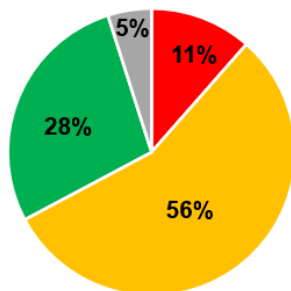


Figure 1

Anticipated RAG rating for 'confident compliance' in September 2024

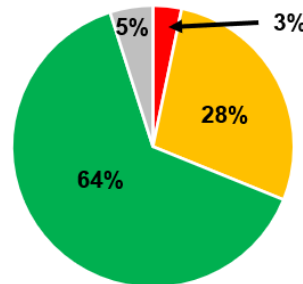


Figure 2

RISK ASSESSMENT

16. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report. It is however of note that Fareham Housing could be selected for an Inspection by the Regulator at any point, with only 6-weeks' notice provided. The likelihood of achieving a C1 or C2 grading, i.e. 'compliant' (see Appendix A for more detail on 'Inspections and Results'), will increase as more actions are successfully progressed/completed during 2024/25.

CONCLUSION

17. In response to the new Consumer Standards for social landlords, Fareham Housing have developed an Action Plan which identifies actions that will collectively increase confidence in being compliant with the new standards. The Action Plan is an iterative document that can be used as an ongoing reference point, with the intention to drive and monitor positive progress against the standards.

Appendices: Appendix A: Draft Action Plan (To achieve 'confident compliance' with the Housing Consumer Standards)

Appendix B: RAG rating assessment at June 2024

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: 08 February 2024 Housing Scrutiny Panel Report (New Consumer Standards from the Regulator of Social Housing)
Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards [Online via [Regulatory standards for landlords - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-standards-for-landlords)]

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Robyn Lyons (01329 824305)