

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date **24 October 2024**

Report of: **Director of Housing**

Subject: **Consumer Standards: Performance**

SUMMARY

Consumer Standards now apply to all Registered Providers of social housing. The new standards are intended to protect tenants and drive improvement in the services that social landlords provide.

This report provides an annual review of Fareham Housing's progress and performance against the specific expectations of the Consumer Standards. This forms part of the governance, assurance and monitoring agreed by the Council's Executive in July 2024.

Significant progress has been made since the new standards came into force on 01 April 2024, including new strategies and policies being developed and adopted. Performance against the standards will only be fully tested and understood as/when the Council is inspected by the Regulator of Social Housing.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel:

- (a) raises any questions, or points of clarification, as part of assurance that the Council are seeking to meet the required standards;
- (b) notes the content of the report, including the current anticipated performance against the Consumer Standards; and
- (c) notes the draft updated Action Plan relating to compliance with the Standards, which is included at Appendix A.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 provided new powers to the Regulator of Social Housing. These changes are intended to further protect social housing tenants, and drive improvement in the services that social housing landlords provide. New Consumer Standards for Registered Providers of social housing were developed by the Regulator, coming into force from 01 April 2024. These standards apply to Fareham Housing (i.e. Fareham Borough Council in their capacity as social landlord).
2. This report provides an update on progress by Fareham Housing in relation to the specific expectations of the Consumer Standards.

BACKGROUND

3. In February 2024 the Housing Scrutiny Panel received a report which explained the standards (emerging/draft at that time), the inspection regime (by the Regulator of Social Housing), and Fareham Housing Officer's interpretation on a RAG rating basis of how Fareham Housing performed against the specific expectations.
4. Further to this, in July 2024, the Council's Executive agreed the content of an Action Plan, which would be iteratively reviewed, that seeks to achieve confident compliance with the new standards. Part of the recommendations associated with this report noted that Governance and Assurance would principally involve the Executive Member for Housing and the Housing Scrutiny Panel.
5. The Action Plan states that a report will be presented annually to the Housing Scrutiny Panel as part of ongoing governance and assurance.

UPDATE ON SELF ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE STANDARDS – OCT '24

6. A RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating spreadsheet is maintained by Officers to understand how Fareham Housing are meeting, or what needs to be done to meet, confident compliance with the specific expectations in the Consumer Standards.
7. In February 2024 (and as supported by the first iteration of the Action Plan in July 2024) only 28% of the specific expectations were considered to be 'green' (Figure 1). The position in October 2024 (Figure 2) is much improved, with 67% of the specific expectations now anticipated to be confidently compliant.

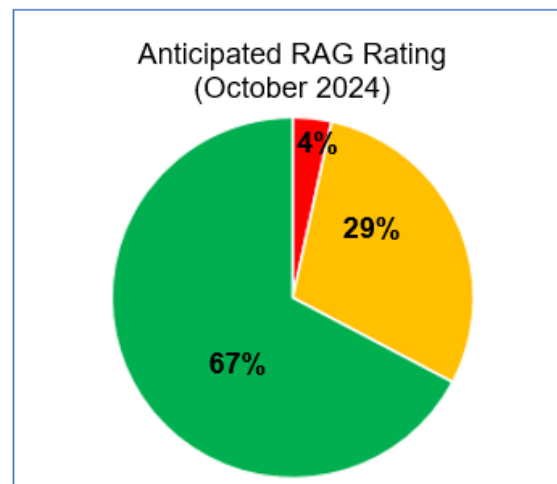
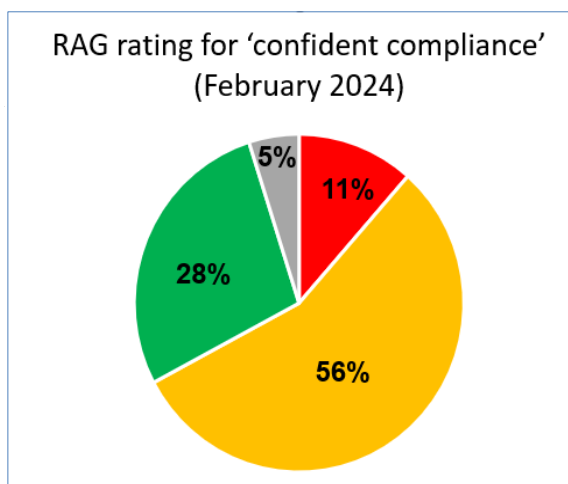


Figure 1

Figure 2

8. Key actions achieved since spring 2024 include: -
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Policy adopted.
 - Tenant Engagement Strategy adopted.
 - Annual Housing Report 2024 published.
 - Mutual Exchange Policy adopted.
 - Tenant Satisfaction Measures (annual submission to Regulator of Social Housing) completed/submitted.
 - Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code.
9. There remains further work to be done. This is articulated in the iterative Action Plan (proposed version 2 included at Appendix A).

THE ACTION PLAN

10. The Action Plan was originally agreed by Executive in July 2024. As part of ongoing review and assessment, a revised and updated Action Plan is included at Appendix A. At this stage track changes have been left in place on the updated Action Plan so that Members of the Panel can see (particularly on tables 1-4) where actions have been completed or updated.
11. Should the recommendations of this report be agreed, then the track changes will be accepted to form Version 2 of the Action Plan.
12. The Action Plan will continue to be iteratively updated, and formal annual updates will continue to be provided to the Housing Scrutiny Panel. Discussions and updates will also continue to separately take place with the Executive Member of Housing.

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. Fareham Housing's compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards will only be fully tested when the Council receives its first cyclical inspection. The RAG rating status currently applied is based on Officer interpretation of performance, where relevant this considers understandings/learnings from inspection outcomes elsewhere. It should be noted that the inspection process and standards remain relatively new.
14. Work will continue in line with the Action Plan, but there remains a risk that should Fareham Housing be inspected in the short term, then a C1 or C2 (i.e. compliant) rating may not be achieved.

CONCLUSION

15. A significant number of key actions have been progressed (such as the adoption of certain strategies and policies), and these have improved the extent to which the Council is moving toward confident compliance with the Consumer Standards. Work will continue on other actions.

Appendices: A – Action Plan Version 2 (October 2024), currently in draft.

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: 08 February 2024 (Housing Scrutiny Panel): ‘New Consumer Standards from the Regulator of Social Housing’ report ([Item 10 here](#))
15 July 2024 (Executive): Housing Consumer Standards report ([Item 8\(3\) here](#))

Enquiries:

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