

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet Housing Committee – 12 September 2024

Stock Condition Survey Update: Knowing our Properties

Accountable member:

Cllr Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services

Accountable officer:

Vicky Day – Head of Technical & Investment

Ward(s) affected:

All wards with council owned homes

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

To meet the requirements of the new Consumer Standards, registered providers “must have accurate up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes that reliably informs their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants”.

The information currently held on the housing management system stock condition survey is not up to date and we are therefore non-compliant with this requirement. It is therefore necessary to undertake a new stock condition survey encompassing all homes and communal areas.

A contract is in place with a competent consultancy to undertake the stock condition surveys, with surveys due to commence on the 16th September 2024. The contract requires the survey to be completed within 12 months of commencement. However, we are working with the consultant with a view to reducing the timescale for completion and to ensure that the first phase of the survey will deliver a stratified sample of surveys across the stock to provide early indications of where unexpected issues may arise.

Recommendations:

1. None – this report is to raise awareness of an area of non-compliance with the Consumer Standards and will be used to update on progress through to compliance.
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

Budgetary provision was made in the 2024/25 HRA capital budget to undertake a 100% stock condition survey.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

As identified in the report failure to have up to date stock condition information means that the council is currently non-compliant with consumer standards and may therefore be subject to a regulatory judgment and intervention from the Regulator.

Signed off by: Claire Hughes, Monitoring Officer claire.hughes@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

A climate impact assessment has not been undertaken for this project; however the survey includes for undertaking energy surveys on homes where these do not currently exist; these will support applications for grant funding and ensure informed decisions can be made with regard to improving the energy efficiency of homes in line with the Council's target of achieving #NetZero carbon by 2030.

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Working with residents, communities and businesses to help make Cheltenham #netzero by 2030
- Increasing the number of affordable homes through our £180m housing investment plan
- Being a more modern, efficient and financially sustainable council

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

The condition surveys will identify any adaptations that have been made to make the property suitable for tenants with disabilities and further work which may be required to make it suitable for tenants with disabilities. This will benefit current residents and help ensure properties can be allocated to suitable new tenants in the future when they become void.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

The project includes for performance management of the survey, both ensuring the quality of the information gathered and meeting the agreed timeline for surveys.

2 Background

- 2.1 The new Consumer Standards, brought in by the Social Housing Act which came into effect from 1st April 2024, they require all registered providers to know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them.
- 2.2 To meet this requirement, registered providers “must have accurate up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes that reliably informs their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants”.
- 2.3 Data we hold on the condition of components in our properties is updated upon component renewal and when improvements are undertaken and visits to and inspections of homes are undertaken on a regular basis, however few full stock condition surveys have been undertaken within the last five years and as such the information we hold is not up to date and we are therefore non-compliant as we are unable to evidence that we fully know the condition of our homes or risks that may be present.
- 2.4 Provision was made in the 2024/25 HRA capital budget to undertake a 100% stock condition survey to check the information we hold and to update this where necessary. We have procured a contract for a competent consultant to carry out the survey and surveys are due to commence on 16th September.
- 2.5 Once we have confirmation that the software development required to deliver the survey is complete, tested and reliable we will work with the consultant on the programme for delivery of the survey with the aim to achieve the earliest possible completion.
- 2.6 The contract requires the survey to be completed within a 12 month period, however it is expected that this timeframe will be significantly shortened. By the end of 2024, a stratified sample of 20% homes and communal areas will be undertaken to provide evidence of issues that may exist and which we are currently unaware of.
- 2.7 The contract includes for performance and quality management which will be used to monitor progress.
- 2.8 We are taking the opportunity to undertake energy surveys (EPCs) on homes where we currently do not have up to date energy surveys in place (around 50% of homes). This improved information will assist in grant applications and decision making in relation to energy/carbon reduction programmes to support the Councils #NetZero Carbon target.
- 2.9 We have communicated to tenants the need to carry out the survey and hope to have their co-operation in allowing access. The contract includes for a tight and evidenced communication plan.

3 Reasons for recommendations

3.1 N/A

4 Alternative options considered

4.1 None

5 Consultation and feedback

5.1 None

6 Key risks

6.1 If the contracted consultant fails to meet the agreed programme for survey delivery or there are issues with the reliability of software used to collect data then this will extend the timescale to become compliant.

Report author:

Vicky Day – Head of Technical & Investment

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Appendices:

None

Background information:

None