# Cheltenham Borough Council

# Cabinet Housing Committee – 26 November 2025

# Housing Improvement Programme

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**Accountable member:**

Cllr Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services

**Accountable officer:**

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

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**Executive summary:**

A report to update the Cabinet Housing Committee on the Council's housing improvement programme. Providing a copy of the self- assessment against the consumer standards and feedback from Housing Quality Network on that self-assessment

The report also sets out the governance arrangements for the programme.

**Recommendations:**

1. That the Cabinet Housing Committee notes the report.

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## 1 Background

1.1 This report is to update the committee on the Council's housing improvement programme.

1.2 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced new consumer standards, which came into effect on 1 April 2024. From this date, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) transitioned from a reactive approach, where it could only investigate consumer issues in cases of 'serious detriment', to a proactive regulatory model.

1.3 As a result, the Council is now subject to inspections by the RSH. Following any inspection, landlords are graded from C1 to C4, with C1 indicating full compliance and effective delivery of outcomes, and C4 indicating significant areas of concern.

1.4 To ensure compliance and readiness for inspection, the Council has established a Housing Improvement Programme, led by the Director of Governance, Housing and Communities. The

programme not only aims to meet the new standards but also sets out an action plan to position the Council for a C1 assessment.

## 2 Governance

2.1 The programme is overseen by the Housing Improvement Team, which acts as the programme board. This team comprises specialists, workstream leads, and a project manager, and meets monthly to:

- Review progress against workstream action plans

- Consider risks and issues

- Ensure alignment with the Council's digital roadmap, with input from the Head of Digital Development and Programme Office

2.2 The programme is structured around four workstreams, aligned with the four consumer standards:

1. Safety and Quality

2. Transparency, Influence and Accountability

3. Neighbourhood and Community

4. Tenancy

2.3  Each workstream is led by designated officers responsible for:

- Oversight and delivery of the action plan

- Logging and maintaining evidence for inspection

- Reporting progress via monthly highlight reports to the programme board

2.4 Starting January 2026, quarterly reports will be presented to this committee. These reports will include:

- A summary of key highlights from the previous quarter

- Progress against actions (expressed as a percentage)

- Key risks and issues

This will enable members, tenants, and leaseholders, via their representatives or the public question process, to effectively scrutinise the Council's improvement journey.

Update reports will also be presented directly to the Tenant Panel and Leaseholder Panel.

## 3 Self-Assessment

3.1 In August, the Council completed a self-assessment against the consumer standards, identifying areas of strength and those requiring further improvement to achieve compliance. A copy of the self-assessment is attached at Appendix 2.

3.2 To validate the findings, the Council commissioned the Housing Quality Network (HQN) to review the evidence and conduct meetings with relevant staff. This review has now concluded, and a feedback session has taken place.

3.3 The feedback from HQN was as expected.  It highlighted areas where we are doing well and areas for improvement.  We were pleased that the areas of improvement aligned with those we had already identified.

3.4 In summary they identified:

- Evidence across most areas was well-organised and well-labelled
- Self-Assessments were fair, and identified areas of challenge
- Self-Assessment on safety and quality needs to include more detail around repairs, maintenance and planned improvements and aids and adaptations
- Overarching documents showing governance, structure for tenant input, etc were helpful
- Staff involved in workshops were knowledgeable, helpful and engaged
- In some areas policies etc are still CBH which need to be updated
- In HQN's opinion the compliance strategy is an excellent foundational document
- Very good TSMs will be helpful in your story

3.5 Some key areas for improvement against each of the standards are set out as follows:

| Standard | Area for Improvement |
|---|---|
| <u>Safety and Quality</u><br><br>• Compliance strategy was highlighted as excellent.<br><br>• TSM results are very good | • Need to confirm decent homes/HHSRS/EPC position<br>• Asset management strategy needs updating<br>• Need to confirm if stock condition survey covers 100% of the stock and includes internal/external/communal areas/<br>• Insufficient evidence on repairs<br>• Aids and adaptations needs more work |
| <u>Transparency, Influence and Accountability</u><br><br>• Voice plan identified as being a great document<br><br>• Good TSMs<br><br>• Good tenant engagement<br><br>• Excellent annual report | • Capture training records for staff e.g. those who have attended equalities training etc<br>• Complete the work on updating the single equality scheme<br>• Provide evidence of where we have changed things because we agreed that a process was unfair<br>• Complete the work on updating the tenant handbook – set out our timescales for doing this<br>• Include timescales in the self-assessment for updating the website<br>• Identify a programme for developing our service standards with tenants |
| <u>Neighbourhood and Community</u><br><br>• Lots of good partnership work | • Good partnership work but we need to evidence it more<br>• Publish things like cleaning and maintenance schedules<br>• Invite residents to join estate inspections on a regular basis |

- Consider developing a policy on promoting wellbeing
- Finish work on updating the domestic abuse policy

<u>Tenancy</u>

- Good policies in place

- Fraud work is good

- Lots of good support work done directly through CBC

- Need better data on aids and adaptations – do we know how many homes we have that have been adapted?
- Ensure KPI reporting includes the numbers of tenants downsizing

3.6 Overall, whilst the feedback does highlight areas of improvement these were, in the main, areas which the Council had already identified and for which there are relevant action plans in place.

3.7 We will now spend the coming weeks completing as many of the actions as we can.  Where work is required over a longer period, detailed plans with timescales will be put in place.  To provide further validation and assurance of our position we will then undergo a full mock inspection early in the new year. The outcome of which will be reported to this committee.

## 4  Key risks

See risk assessment at Appendix 1.

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## Appendices:

1. Risk Assessment
2. Self-Assessment against consumer standards

## Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

| Risk ref | Risk description | Risk owner | Impact score (1-5) | Likelihood score (1-5) | Initial raw risk score (1 - 25) | Risk response | Controls / Mitigating actions | Control / Action owner | Deadline for controls/ actions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | If we do not have relevant evidence of compliance with the consumer standards then we may receive regulatory intervention | Director of Governance, Housing and Communities | 4 | 3 | 12 | Reduce | Workshops completed with relevant officers to capture data.<br><br>HQN reviewed self assessment and action plan<br><br>New improvement team in place and linked to digital roadmap project | Director of Governance, Housing and Communities | Ongoing |
| 2. | If we do not have regular reports to committee on our improvement journey then there is a risk that we are not complying with the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard | Director of Governance, Housing and Communities | 2 | 2 | 4 | Accept | Quarterly reporting in place | Director of Governance, Housing and Communities | January 2026 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. | If we do not link the housing improvement project to the digital roadmap then there is a risk that relevant interdependencies are not identified resulting in delays in delivery | Director of Governance, Housing and Communities | 2 | 2 | 4 | Accept | Process in place with Head of Digital Development and Programme Office attending programme board meetings | Director of Governance, Housing and Communities | Completed |