

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS: ALL</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b> The Social Housing Regulation Bill and Consumer Standards	
<b>REPORT OF:</b> Director of Property Management	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO:</b> Fire Safety & Compliance Advisory Panel	<b>DATE</b> 21 June 2023
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT:</b></p> <p>The regulatory landscape is changing and the Regulator for Social Housing will be working with local authorities to assess how they are meeting their consumer standards. This may include inspections, monitoring of compliance information (e.g. electrical checks, fire risk assessments and gas safety checks), resident satisfaction and referrals made to them.</p> <p>Other regulatory measures include the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022, whereby all social landlords are required to provide Carbon Monoxide detection where a combustion appliance is in place (such as a boiler) and a smoke alarm on each storey of a property used for living accommodation.</p> <p>The Council has been very proactive in relation to building safety and is currently establishing its new Building Safety Team who will carry out safety checks and prepare our safety cases for tall buildings. All of this work helps to make sure that Camden fulfils its objectives and commitments in relation to resident safety.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p><u>The following documents have been used in the preparation of this report:</u></p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Melissa Dillon: Resident Safety Engagement &amp; Governance Lead</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:melissa.dillon@camden.gov.uk">melissa.dillon@camden.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Tel. 0207 974 3100</p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b></p> <p>The Panel is asked to note the report and provide comments on the next steps outlined in section 5.</p>	



Signed:

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management

Date: 7 June 2023

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The regulatory landscape is changing and the Regulator for Social Housing will be working with local authorities to assess how they are meeting their consumer standards. This may include inspections, monitoring of compliance information (e.g. electrical checks, fire risk assessments and gas safety checks), resident satisfaction and referrals made to them.
- 1.2 Other regulatory measures include the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022, whereby all social landlords are required to provide Carbon Monoxide detection where a combustion appliance is in place (such as a boiler) and a smoke alarm on each storey of a property used for living accommodation.
- 1.3 The Council has been very proactive in relation to building safety and is currently establishing its new Building Safety Team who will carry out safety checks and prepare our safety cases for tall buildings. All of this work helps to make sure that Camden fulfils its objectives and commitments in relation to resident safety.
- 1.4 This report provides an update on the work of the Regulator for Social Housing and the Council's work to prepare for the regulatory changes.

## 2. Context & Background

- 2.1 The Social Housing Regulation Bill is currently in Parliament, and once it is enacted Government will implement new consumer regulation of council and other social housing early in 2024.
- 2.2 Government has said that it will consult on their proposed new consumer standards in Summer 2023 and in preparation for the new legislation has already introduced new tenant satisfaction measures with landlords due to carry out their first benchmarking surveys in 2023. Details of the RSH's plans for social housing regulation can be found here on the government website: [Reshaping consumer regulation: Our implementation plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reshaping-consumer-regulation-our-implementation-plan)
- 2.3 The intentions are that the revised regulatory approach will ensure that:
  - *Landlords maintain tenants' homes so that they are safe and of a decent standard and that landlords provide a quality service*
  - *Where things go wrong, complaints are handled effectively, and things are put right.*
  - *The relationship between tenants and landlords is underpinned by shared expectations of fairness and respect and a shared understanding of their respective rights and responsibilities.*
  - *Landlords demonstrate that they understand the diverse needs of the communities that they serve and their services reflect that.*

- *Tenants understand, use and have confidence in the recourse that they have to get problems resolved.*
- *Stakeholders have confidence that landlords' commitment to their tenants is underpinned by effective consumer regulation, whether that landlord is a housing association, council or for-profit provider.*

### **3. Links to the Building Safety Act 2022**

- 3.1 The Building Safety Act created three new bodies to provide oversight of a new building safety regime. These bodies have a duty to cooperate and to provide a coherent approach to the regulation of the safety and quality of existing housing and new build homes, they are:
- Building Safety Regulator
  - National Regulator of Construction Products
  - New Homes Ombudsman.
- 3.2 The Building Safety Regulator oversees the safety and performance of all buildings, as well as having a special focus on high-rise buildings. It will promote competence and organisational capability within the sector including for building control professionals and tradespeople.
- 3.3 The National Regulator for Construction Products (NRCP) will oversee the construction products regulatory regime. A construction products regime will start to apply once secondary regulations are approved by Parliament later this year.
- 3.4 The New Homes Ombudsman Scheme will allow owners of new-build homes to escalate complaints about quality and management to a New Homes Ombudsman. Developers of new-build homes will be required by new regulations to become and remain members of the New Homes Ombudsman Scheme and there will an enforcement framework and sanctions for breaching requirements.

### **4. Social Housing Regulator Safety and Consumer Standards**

- 4.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill is introducing a specific safety consumer standard to cover landlords' safety responsibilities including safety within the home and in communal areas. The government says that all landlords must provide homes and services that are safe and that this is the fundamental responsibility of a landlord.
- 4.2 The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill will review not only the safety of tenants' homes and communal areas but also safety of the tenants living within those

homes and how services are delivered. Landlords will be expected to understand their health and safety obligations and identify and act on associated risks and issues so that tenants remain safe in their homes. The consumer standard for safety will also link to separate consumer standards for the quality of housing and the wider safety of the neighbourhood within which it is located, and for engagement with and accountability to residents.

#### *Quality*

- 4.3 The Quality consumer standard will require all landlords to provide good quality homes which meet the government Decent Homes Standard. This means that both having an effective repairs and maintenance service, and keeping tenants informed about repairs and planned improvements are central to delivering good quality homes. The Social Housing Regulator will also look at performance on compliance data such as fire safety actions and electrical checks.

#### *Neighbourhoods*

- 4.4 The Neighbourhood consumer standard will require landlords to play a role in contributing to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces although the RSH recognised that landlords (including local authorities) are not always the primary organisation responsible for all aspects of their neighbourhoods.

#### *Engagement and accountability*

- 4.5 The RSH will expect landlords to consider how best to engage with their tenants and to really understand their feedback, so that tenants can influence decision making and meaningfully influence the services they receive.

### **5.0 Next Steps**

- 5.1 The Council's Our Camden Plan included the overarching commitment that all Council homes will be as safe as possible by 2025, and that the Resident Safety Programme will be developed and delivered by working with residents and listening to what they say.
- 5.2 In 2020 the Council carried out a borough-wide Safer Council Homes survey to find out what made residents feel safe or unsafe in their homes and developed the Camden Fire and Building Safety Charter commitments on the basis of what they said. The second annual report on delivering the commitments will come to the Panel in Autumn 2023 and then be sent to all Council homes.
- 5.3 The Council will review the Charter commitments to ensure that they meet the new consumer standards for safety, quality, neighbourhoods, engagement and accountability so that residents are able to live safely in their homes and know that they are safe. The Council will also continue to build on its work to:

- Fulfil new regulations such as communal fire door checks and installation of smoke and CO detectors
- Establish a new building safety team to carry out building safety checks on tall buildings and prepare our building safety cases
- Work with Government on the shaping of safety regulations as part of its Early Adopter Groups

5.4 The Social Housing Regulator will be carrying out public consultation on the draft consumer standards during summer 2023 including measures for assessing tenant satisfaction with the Council's performance and the Panel will be invited to review the proposals and provide comments as part of the Council's response to consultation.

5.5 Once the consumer standards and satisfaction measures are finalised and published by the SHR, satisfaction data on the safety, quality, neighbourhoods, engagement and accountability standards could be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Panel. This would ensure oversight of performance and service improvement in these areas as part of the wider Resident Safety programme.

## **6. Legal Comments**

6.1 Legal Services have been consulted and have no additional comments.

## **7. Finance Comments**

7.1 Contents of the report are noted.

## **8. Environmental Implications**

8.1 There are no direct environmental implications from this report.

**ENDS**