

Scrutiny Board:	Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board
Report Title	Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan Update
Date of Meeting	3 July 2025
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Lead Officer	Executive Director, Place Alan Lunt
Wards Affected All	All Wards
Appendices (if any)	1. HIT Actions Exemption Report July 2025

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The appended Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan Exception Report July 2025 provides an update to the Board on the progress against the Housing Improvement and Transformation Programme (HITP).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board is recommended to consider and comment upon the Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan Exception Report to provide scrutiny on the progress of the plan.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

- 3.1 During October 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) issued a 'C3' Regulatory Judgement (RJ) to the council indicating that there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed. Specifically, 4 areas were of concern to the Regulator.
- Asbestos management surveys or re-inspections had been carried out on only around 2% of relevant buildings.

- Although electrical safety inspections had been completed for 96% of its homes, the council is unable to monitor or report on the completion of remedial actions arising from those inspections.
 - The council reported more than 14,000 overdue repairs, with over 90% of these yet to be assigned for completion.
 - The Safety and Quality Standard requires the council to have an 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 our tenants. The council reported that while it intended to carry out a comprehensive (100%) stock condition evaluation of its housing stock, only 5% of surveys were at the time completed.
- 3.2 Since then,, the council's housing service has engaged in regular meetings with the RSH to discuss any emerging/ additional issues, progress towards compliance with the Regulatory Standard and to provide clarity on the governance arrangements employed within the council to ensure there is robust and comprehensive oversight of the journey towards compliance. Part of the process is the presentation of a progress update to this Scrutiny Board on a quarterly basis.
- 3.3 Details on the progress of the new Housing IT Systems is as follows;

Compliance Management System

- 3.4 Sandwell Council previously managed housing compliance information in several ways, outside of a specific compliance management system. The Regulator highlighted this as a major area of concern and a commitment was made to procure and implement a suitable software system to manage compliance. The recently procured compliance system, C365Cloud, has been populated with clean data and configured to manage the performance of the six major safety factors (Gas, Electric, Fire, Asbestos, Water and Lifts). A transition period, where dual reporting is maintained across all six factors, will ensure accuracy of the data held in C365Cloud and suitable processes are in place to manage the data.
- 3.5 Alongside the management of the main six compliance factors initially implemented, further enhancements to C365Cloud are being planned to maximise the future benefits and effectiveness of the system. The enhancement programme includes 100+ activities which contribute towards Sandwell Council's building safety compliance and the safety of its tenants.

Integrated Housing Management System

- 3.6 The technical specification for this IT solution has been developed in collaboration with key stakeholders and external Housing IT specialists. The approach taken is to move away from on-premise systems to cloud-based, in alignment with the councils IT Strategy. In addition, there is also an emphasis on procuring as few systems as possible, but as many as is required to meet operational needs and statutory obligations. The technical specification is split into four lots, detailed as follows;

Lot 1 – Asset Management

- 3.7 There is currently no asset management system in place for Housing, with limited value achieved from utilisation of data within spreadsheets and other documents. The RSH has highlighted the inability of Sandwell Council to effectively plan investment in its housing portfolio because of not using an effective Asset Management System.

Lot 2 – Housing Management

- 3.8 Sandwell Council currently uses Capita's Open Housing software system as its housing management solution. Open Housing is at 'end of life' (classified as a legacy product) with only limited support available. The most recent support and maintenance contract expired at end March 2025, with an extended support agreement agreed beyond that date to cover the implementation period of a new Housing Management System.

Lot 3 – Lettings and Homelessness

- 3.9 Sandwell Council currently uses MRI's Jigsaw to manage homelessness cases. Jigsaw does not have any specific functionality for managing advice and prevention and there is no integration with Open Housing, resulting in re-keying of data across the two systems.

Lot 4 – Property Services

- 3.10 Sandwell Council currently uses Advanced's Job Manager and Dynamic Resource Scheduler to manage most of its housing maintenance job activities. There is good integration between these systems and Sandwell's digital presence, enabling tenants to log and self-appoint a repair. There is no integration with Open Housing, to keep it updated with job history etc, which is important for all housing staff to be able to see the complete picture from a tenancy / property perspective. There is also no integration with Sandwell's Housing Data Warehouse. The current contract with Advanced is due for renewal in early 2026.

Procurement Route for Software Systems

- 3.11 The re-evaluation of the procurement route, by Procurement and Legal colleagues, has now concluded. Procurement delays, and commencement of the new Procurement Act 2023 legislation at end of February 2025, has resulted in a delay in the commencement of procurement activity.
- 3.12 The Competitive Flexible Procedure (CFP) of Procurement Act 2023 has now commence; Procurement Pipeline Notice published 23 May 2025 and statutory Preliminary Market Engagement Notice published 3 June 2025. Procurement activity has been impacted by introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 with additional steps included in the procedure.
- 3.13 The Project Team is currently working with Procurement on preparations for a supplier engagement / information session to be held late July / early August 2025. Contract Award is now expected by end February 2026.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 These updates are also shared with Tenant Leaseholder and Scrutiny Group, Senior Leadership Team and at Leaders meeting to ensure all stakeholders are sighted on the progress.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The HITP is being delivered within the budgetary envelop established for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

7. Legal and Governance Implications

- 7.1 The Regulator of Social Housing intervenes where there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards regulatory framework and significant improvement is needed. The council also must comply with the statutory and regulatory frameworks established for social landlords

8. Risks

- 8.1 A risk registers specifically relating to the obligations to achieve the requirements of the regulatory framework for social housing has been developed and is monitored monthly.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 9.1 There are no equality implications because of this report.

10. Other Relevant Implications

- 10.1 Achieving the requirements of the relevant regulatory standards will ensure the fitness, safety and security of the council's homes for use as social housing and in doing so ensure the wellbeing of our tenants.

11. Background Documents

None

12. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

This report will support the delivery of the following Strategic Themes:-

- Living in Sandwell
- Healthy in Sandwell
- Thriving Economy in Sandwell
- One Council One Team Approach.

- 12.1 The Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan will ensure we can deliver an excellent Housing Service to residents in Sandwell. This will provide ensure we can provide good quality, safe and affordable homes with access to good quality services that support residents to live independently in thriving communities.