SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: **Overview and Scrutiny**

DATE: **24th November 2026**

SUBJECT: **Housing Services Update**

REPORT FROM: **Sian Grant, Director of Housing**

CONTACT OFFICER: **Sian Grant, Director of Housing**

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 This report provides members with an update on housing services and the improvements that are being made to the service to ensure we deliver excellent services to tenants and meet the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing's consumer standards.

1.2 The last report to overview and scrutiny was in June 2026, shortly before the Regulatory for Social Housing was due on site in July to carry out our first regulatory inspection.

1.3 The report provides overview and scrutiny committee an update on the outcome of the regulatory inspection on the housing service, progress on our action plan in key areas and how this is impacted by the inspection outcome and updates on key performance indicators as at the end of October 2026.

2.0 Regulatory inspection outcome

2.1 As the committee are aware the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced a stronger inspection regime for housing following lessons from Grenfell Tower and the death of Awaab Ishak. This included the introduction of a proactive inspection regime for local authorities. Landlords with more than 1,000 homes are subject to regular programmed inspections, typically within a four-year cycle.

2.2 In 2023 the Council made the decision to bring Six Town Housing, its Arm's Length management company, back in house following concerns about its management of the housing stock following a self-referral to the RSH about fire safety compliance. The transfer back in house was completed in February 2024, with a full permanent leadership team in place by November 2025.

2.3 When the council made the decision to bring STH came back in house when it became clear that performance on key compliance issues was not accurate and we could be no longer be assured of the validity of the data. There was also a lack of triangulation with feedback from what tenants were telling us and that there were a number of issues with data quality across a range of services areas. We also found that a number of service areas were not meeting requirements of the consumer standards or best practice. This included key service areas such as;

- Fire safety, electrical safety and gas safety
- Anti-social behaviour management
- Complaints handling
- Repairs and maintenance
- Caretaking and cleaning

2.4 Since February 2024 the service has been working hard to put in place the fundamentals to ensure we can build and deliver an excellent housing service. This has included improving data quality in key areas, improving performance reporting to show a true picture of performance, strengthening key teams and service areas and bringing in external support to provide assurance and guide improvement in key areas.

2.4 In May 2026, the Council received notification that it was being inspected by the RSH and following the submission of a significant amount of evidence to support the inspection and demonstrate the improvement made since bringing the stock back in house, the inspection took place from 20th – 22nd July 2026.

2.5 Following an inspection, landlords are given one of four ratings:

- C1 – overall the landlord is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord has demonstrated that it identifies when issues occur and puts plans in place to remedy and minimise reoccurrence.
- C2 – no failings but some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed.
- C3 – there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed.
- C4 – there are very serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord must make fundamental changes to that improved outcomes are delivered.

2.6 The Council was advised by the Regulator on 22nd October 2026 that it had received a C3 rating. This grading was published on 11th November 2026. It was the Regulator's judgement that there are serious failings in how we are delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed.

2.7 Specifically, the Regulator found serious failings in the Safety and Quality Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. They also found weaknesses requiring improvement in the delivery of some of the outcomes of the Neighbour and Community Standard. They found that we were meeting the expectations of the Tenancy Standard. The regulatory judgement can be found here.

2.8 The Regulator also provided more detailed feedback, which is not included as part of the regulatory judgement. As part of this feedback they stated we had made significant progress in improving the service since it had been brought back in house and that they could see that significant and fundamental changes had been put in place. They had been assured that we have a full understanding of where we are and that we have improvement plans in place to address the issues but that the time of the inspection these plans were at an early stage and were not yet embedded enough to show outcomes. They were also assured that we had the leadership and the capability to continue to improve the service.

2.9 They also identified that data quality is a cross-cutting theme in the judgement and that our data quality was not sufficiently robust to provide assurance. There was a specific ask that we look at improving how we audit our data and assure senior leaders and councillors of its accuracy. They also noted that we are in the process of upgrading our housing management system and this was a key part of improving our data quality and data governance.

2.10 Overall, they stated that the inspection is a point in time and they could see a positive trajectory of improvement which provides assurance that we will meet the requirements of the higher grades in time.

Communicating the outcome

2.11 The regulatory judgement was published on 11th November 2026 at 9.30am. A number of communication activities took place following the immediate publication of the judgement including briefing all housing staff and councillors. We also informed tenants via a letter send via CX our text messaging service – over 3500 tenants read the message. We also ensured that the judgement went live on our website. Last week we also sent a letter by post to all tenants along with some questions and answers.

2.12 A report will go to Housing Advisory Board on 18th November for discussion of the outcomes and on the next steps, followed by Cabinet on 2nd December.

Regulatory Judgement Improvement Plan

2.13 As we have been graded as a C3 we will have intensive engagement with the RSH going forward in the form of monthly meetings. At the meetings they will seek assurance that we are making sufficient and timely progress to improve. This will include monitoring our plans for improvement and ensuring there are improved outcomes for tenants.

2.14 As committee are aware , Bury Housing Services already has a substantial action plan in place to improve services. We will review this action plan to ensure it covers all the feedback and areas for improvement from the regulatory judgement and more detailed verbal feedback provided by the regulator. Over the next few weeks we will work to develop a draft regulatory improvement plan for discussion and approval by the regulator.

2.15 We will also share and discuss the regulatory judgement with involved tenants at a meeting on 23rd November. This will include the start of a wider discussion on how we improve engagement with tenants and how we can better enable tenants to be involved in decision making and scrutiny. We also plan to discuss the findings with service managers at our quarterly service managers meeting on 25th November. The views gather in these sessions will inform the improvement plan. The regulatory judgement and draft improvement plan will be presented to Cabinet on 2nd December.

2.16 It is anticipated that a first meeting with the regulator will take place in December 2026, where we will discuss their expectations of the improvement plan. Once the improvement plan has been agreed with the regulator we will present the final improvement plan to HAB, staff and tenants.

3.0 2026/27 performance

3.1 Our quarter 2 performance scorecard is attached at appendix one. This provides detail of our performance up to the end of the first quarter of this financial year.

Tenant satisfaction

3.3 The scorecard provides performance against the tenant satisfaction measures for the first half of the year. 326 satisfaction surveys have been completed year to date which is a return rate of 10%. At this point in time the survey results are only an indication of performance as the final satisfaction is based on all surreys across the year.

3.4 Whist satisfaction remains under the targets we have set for the year, with the exception of ‘satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained’, satisfaction has increased across all indicators compared to the position at the end of March 2026. This provides positive feedback that the work we are undertaking to improve services is being felt by our tenants. Satisfaction with repairs is exceeding target at 81.51%. Complaints satisfaction is more than 10% under target but has improved significantly since the end of march 2026 from 37.63% to 44.66%.

3.5 One of the serious weaknesses identified by the regular was that we are not meeting the technical and survey requirements of the tenant satisfaction measures. As part of our

improvement plan we will be looking to outsources the TSM survey to an external provider for 2027/28.

Asset management performance

3.6 The report provides information on the progress of our stock condition surveys. At the end of September 2026, 87.3% of all homes had a survey in the last 5 years and we had completed 223 surveys during the year so far. We have procured Pennington's to support us to increase the number of stock conditions we are completing and they have now started on site.

3.7 As noted in the last report to Overview and Scrutiny we have changed the way we report on Decency so that we identify at the start of the financial year all properties that will fall into non decency during the year. This enables us to carry out checks and surveys to check the elements that are potentially failing decency to provide is with an accurate picture of where work is needed. We currently have 15.47% of our housing stock which will potentially fall into non decency this year that we will need to survey. We have 831 address where the failing element is external so we are sending out notifications to tenants to say that we will be carrying out external property inspections in their area and taking some external photos to update our records. We are also trialling an amendment to the opt in booking system where we send the appointment and give the option to change it. This will also help contain the appointments into areas and maximise efficiencies. We are monitoring this closely.

Compliance performance

3.8 100% of Fire Risk Assessments are completed and up to date and we are working through the fire remediation actions. The table below provides overview and scrutiny with the number of actions by risk and the type of action that is outstanding. These figures are as at 13th November 2026. These actions relate to buildings where we have communal areas rather than individual homes including our independent living schemes and 281 communal areas or stairwells across our low rise flats. We expect to have addressed all high risk actions by the end of January 2027 and all other actions by the end of March 2027.

Risk level	Description of risk	Number	Type of actions
High risk	High risk due to the nature of the building rather than the actions being high risk or there being an immediate danger to life	24	Repairing and inspecting doors to individual flats Testing and repairing emergency lighting faults. Improving housekeeping in communal areas to reduce combustible materials. Updating fire safety records or evacuation procedures. Repairing non-critical defects to the fire alarm systems
Medium risk	These are improvements that should be completed to reduce fire safety risks but are not considered an immediate danger to life. The expectation is that these actions are addressed as soon as reasonably practicable.	843	Repairing and inspecting doors to individual flats Testing and repairing emergency lighting faults. Improving housekeeping in communal areas to reduce combustible materials. Updating fire safety records or evacuation procedures. Repairing non-critical defects to the fire

			alarm system
Low risk	These are minor fire safety improvements that have little impact on the overall fire safety on the building. They should be completed as part of routine maintenance and good practice but do not require urgent action.	1,552	Removing minor clutter that does not obstruct escape routes. Updating fire logbooks and maintenance records. Adjusting self-closing devices on fire doors where the door is still functioning adequately. Improving staff or resident fire safety awareness through refresher information.

3.9 Currently 96.56% of homes have an electrical safety check less than 5 years old. 431 properties remain non-compliant. Of these 184 properties have had an electrical safety check but have remedial work that needs to be completed, all of which is being progressed by our contractors. The remaining properties are currently outside the 5 year electrical safety check cycle. All of these are being prioritised by our contractor including additional resources to accelerate inspections.

3.10 Gas safety performance remains high at 99.85%. There are 11 properties what are overdue a gas safety check. Four of these properties are at court stage.

Repairs and maintenance

3.11 In the first half of 2026/27 we completed 62.29% of non-emergency repairs within timescales. Performance has been impacted the prioritisation of emergency repairs, damp and mould cases and other high risk works, alongside efforts to reduce historic repairs and overdue repairs. The remaining backlog includes a number of older and more complex repairs requiring specialist trades, follow-on works, multiple visits, or access arrangements. Actions are in place to reduce aged repairs, improve scheduling, increase capacity through recruitment and agency resources, and reduce Work in Progress levels to support improved performance.

3.12 We completed 95.18% of emergency repairs within target timescales. A small number of cases did not hit target due to access issues and increased repair complexity.

3.13 In the first half of the year repairs right first-time performance was 89.98%**.** A significant increase from 75.29% in 2025/26 reflecting improvements to the repairs service.

3.14 The average time to complete appointment repairs was 24 days for the first 6 months of the year compared to a target of 20 days. To improve performance, we are prioritising the clearance of older outstanding repairs, strengthening scheduling and appointment management, and increasing operational capacity through the recruitment of permanent and agency staff. A continued focus on reducing follow-on works, resolving access issues, and lowering the overall backlog is expected to improve completion times over the coming months.

Awaab's law

3.15 Performance against Awaab's law emergency repairs completed within target timescale is 75/1% for the first 6 months of the year and for significant repairs completed within timescale is 70.68%. Month on month performance shows performance is improving as processes become more embedded with 100% of emergency repairs and 74.55% of significant repairs completed within timescales in September 2026.

3.16 Demand for damp and mould investigations remains high, and some cases require specialist surveys or further technical assessment before they can be progressed. This has impacted our ability to consistently achieve the 10-day target.

3.17 A recovery plan is in place with enhanced management oversight of all open cases, weekly review of outstanding investigations, and targeted escalation of cases approaching target timescales. Additional surveyor and contractor capacity is being utilised to increase throughput. We are also strengthening case triage and scheduling arrangements to ensure higher-risk cases are assessed at the earliest opportunity. Improving compliance with Awaab's Law remains a key priority, with a continued focus on reducing outstanding investigations, increasing capacity, and driving sustained improvements in performance over the coming months.

Complaint handling

3.18 Complaint handling performance has improved with a corresponding increase in tenant satisfaction with complaint handling. Tenant satisfaction with complaint handling has improved from 37.6% in 2025/26 to 44.66% in the first half of 2026/27.

3.19 We have continued to see higher volumes of complaints compared to the previous year – primarily as a result of ensuring we have an open and transparent complaint handling culture. Year to date we have received 304 complaints. Ths includes 181 stage one complaints and 123 councillor enquiries.

3.20 During Q2, 152 Stage 1 complaints were received, with only 9 progressing to Stage 2, giving an escalation rate of 5.9%. This means that more than 94% of complaints were resolved without escalation, suggesting that concerns are generally being addressed at the earliest opportunity.

Anti Social Behaviour and Tenancy Management

3.21 Following the Housemark review of the ASB service and Housing Ombudsman findings, an improvement plan was developed to strengthen governance, case management, performance monitoring and customer experience.

3.22 The table below provides up to date performance data on ASB case handling up to the end of September.

	April 2026	**May 2026**	**June 2026**	**July 2026**	**Aug 2026**	**Sept**
Cases Opened	19	12	18	22	17	18
No. Risk Assessment not applicable (Anon/GMP complaints)	3	1	4	3	2	0
Risk Assessment Complete	13 (81%)	10 (91%)	11(79%)	19(95% 1 case)	100%	100%
Action Plan Created	14 (88%)	10 (91%	11 (79%)	19 (95% 1 case)	100%	100%
Contact Arrangement Agreed	8 (62%)	3 (30%)	6 (55%)	17 (90% 2 cases)	100%	100%
Cases Closed	16	16	33	11	12	14

3.23 The table demonstrates the improving performance on ASB case management including ensuring Housing officers are completing risk assessments, agreeing actions plans and agreeing contact arrangements with tenants.

3.24 The new ASB manager started in post in October 2026. This will ensure greater management oversight and quality assurance for the ASB service. It will strengthen case

auditing, further improve consistency in case management and support the delivery of higher service standards across the ASB service.

Relet times

3.25 During 2026/27 we have seen an increase in average relet times with the average relet time at 73 days at the end of September 2026 above the target of 30 days.

3.26 A number of properties have experienced significant delays which have an impact on the average relet time;

- 6 properties have experienced multiple refusals generating 445 void days
- One property was subject to a 70 day hold requested by an applicant awaiting hospital discharge.
- One property had a 13 day delay to arrange support form an interpreter.

3.27 In additional a number of properties experienced delays due to delays in ending tenancies, delays in returning keys and time need to complete major works such as boiler and kitchen replacements before reletting.

3.28 When combined these cases contributed 899 void days which when excluded would lower the average relet time to 42 days, just 3 days above target.

3.29 Actions to improve void turnaround include;

- Reviewing the property offer process and introducing clearer reoffer timescales.
- Producing a customer lettings guide to improve understanding of allocations and sign-up procedures.
- Reviewing Extra Care advertising and furnished property arrangements.
- Working with Housing Options to increase demand for harder-to-let accommodation.
- Improving key return arrangements, void reporting accuracy, and use of pre-termination inspections.
- Recruiting to vacant trade posts and strengthening administrative support within the voids service.

Income management

3.30 Rent arrears remain above target during 2026/27. An improvement plan is in place to address performance issues. A review of accounts has been undertaken and target communication sent to 1716 affected tenants to encourage engagement and early intervention. In addition, communications have been sent to all customers experiencing increasing rent arrears who are in receipt of UC, with the aim of promoting engagement and helping prevent further escalation of debt.

3.31 Training has been undertaken with team to improve call handling and ensure a consistent approach to customer interactions, the customer experience and improve collection outcomes. This will be followed by regular all audits to ensure continuous improvement and best practice.

Housing Service's 26/27 service plan progress

4.1 During 2025/26 we worked with tenants and staff to develop a vision and objectives for the service so that everyone understood the improvements we want to make to the service and we had clear outcome of what that would look like when we achieved it. This is set out on our plan on page which is attached at appendix two.

4.2 Our vision is 'Satisfied tenants, quality homes and united communities' and we have identified 8 objectives to deliver this vision with a number of high level actions for 2026/27. These are set out in the table below;

4.3 Further work will be undertaken to ensure the action plan aligns with the outcome of the inspection and that all key areas area covered. An initial assessment shows that all the issues raised by the regulator are covered by the action plan.

Objective	Key service actions for 2026/27	Date by	Progress
Improve customer service and increase customers influence in our service delivery	Improve our anti social behaviour service increasing tenant satisfaction	March 2027	New ASB manager started on the 19th October to provide further capacity. ASB performance has been improving with 100% compliance with risk assessments and communication plans for September.
	Improve the repairs service increasing efficiency effectiveness and tenant satisfaction	March 2027	Satisfaction with repairs on both transactional and perception is positive 81% YTD on TSM and 80% on transactional. The percentage of repairs completed in timescale is below expectations, in part due to sickness within the DLO. Subcontractors are being used but this increases cost.
	Improve our complaint handling culture	March 2027	The number of complaints is continuing to increase following improvements in process. We are now monitoring the number of upheld complaints to monitor service failures. We are aiming for a high number of complaints with only a minority upheld.
	Develop and implement a vulnerable customer policy	July 2026	Delayed but progressing. Cross service vulnerable tenant and reasonable adjustment training package to be delivered in the new year in line with the new QL upgrade.
	Develop a customer service strategy based on feedback from the Institute of Customer Service	December 2026	Feedback received from ICS and to be discussed with managers at the quarterly forum in November. Three areas of priority; code of conduct to be developed to set expected standards, workshops planned with the call centre and processes review.
	Develop and deliver a programme of tenancy visits	March 2027	Programme of tenancy visits being delivered by the neighbourhoods team. Target set each quarter per Officer. QL upgrade will support online completion of paperwork.
	Review our tenant engagement strategy	March 2027	TPAS have completed a review of our approach to tenants engagement. This will be shared with involved tenants at a meeting on 23rd November and with HAB for discussion at the meeting on 10th December to agree next steps.

	Develop and deliver a communications strategy	July 2026	Strategy has been developed. Resource currently being onboarded to help us deliver the change required.
Improve data governance	Upgrade our housing management system to ensure it is fit for purpose	March 2027	Housing management system upgrade on track with upgrade going live in early January.
	Establish a robust data management framework grounded in knowledge and information management (KIM) principles.	March 2027	Work not yet started. New Head of Performance Business Intelligence and Assurance role will lead a review of the data collected and stored.
	Improve the quality of the data we hold on our tenants and use this data in service delivery and decision making	March 2027	As above new role to take this forward. The first task is to reset the minimum data sets we would like to hold as a service.
	Improve data quality and reporting in the homelessness and housing options service	March 2027	New analyst started in the Homelessness Team. PI's are being reviewed with the New Head of Homelessness and Prevention. Returns are being completed.
Ensure we have a sustainable business plan	Continue to develop and deliver a viable 30 year business plan	Feb 2027	New Finance Strategic Lead for Housing - Grace Rogerson - starts with the authority 12 October 2026. Phase 2 of the Finance Restructure is ongoing so process still being followed to achieve fully resourced permanent team structure. Once the team has been established fully the process of developing business planning expertise can start to gather pace.
	Identify and deliver efficiency savings in both the housing revenue account and the housing general fund	March 2027	Savings have been identified for the HRA and General Fund. Housing will have a task and finish group linked to the Savings workstream. Savings identified in Repairs may not be achieved due to speed of procurement and ongoing use of subcontractors.
	Review service charges	March 2027	Ongoing review of existing service charges with Finance. Next stage is to consider increases, reductions and new charges at HLT.

	Increase rent collection and promote a positive payment culture	March 2027	The income management team have put in place a detailed improvement action plan to reduce arrears and increase rent collection. The action plan focuses on;
			• Data, software and systems
			• Rent collection framework
			  ○ support
			  ○ enforcement

			○ tenant engagement ○ positive payment culture ○ payment optimisation • Performance management
	Develop and deliver a procurement pipeline	March 2027	Repairs and Compliance have several procurement exercises to complete before the end of the year including gas and repairs general building contractor including voids.
Improve the quality of our homes	Develop an asset management strategy	Dec 2026	Delayed due to time and resource work to start October 2026. Asset management board set up to develop and deliver. First meeting 23rd November.
	Carry out a rolling programme of stock condition and retrofit surveys to ensure we fully understand the condition of our homes	March 2027	An external provider has been brought in to support in house team to ensure that the number of surveys required are delivered in year.
	Develop a three-year capital investment programme	March 2027	Analysis and data cleansing is ongoing with scoping planned in preparation for 2027/28.
	Improve our access to homes across repairs, assets and compliance	March 2027	Visited 2200 properties at a door knocking event on 10th November and accessed 411 properties. Now have consistent use of the legal no access process across the teams where access remains an issue.
	Deliver the plan to reduce the number of outstanding EICRs bringing all homes within the 5 year programme	March 2027	Plan on track and EICR compliance has increased to 96% at the end of September
	Deliver the plan to reduce the number of outstanding fire remedial actions	March 2027	Fire remedial actions continue to reduce. New Head of Compliance will ensure work continues to reduce the number including bringing in more contractor and staffing capacity if required to complete actions.
Improve staff satisfaction	Improve staff satisfaction for ‘this is a place I feel valued’ and ‘managers discuss training needs’	March 2027	Held staff awards in July 2026 which were very well received. Consistent briefings and staff engagement on projects such as QL to further increase satisfaction with feeling valued.
	Build a consistent value led service	March 2027	First cohort of manager have been onboard on their level 4

	culture where staff at all levels are aligned around shared behaviours, accountability and a strong customer focus.		qualifications. Code of Conduct to be developed which supports the ICS recommendations.
Prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping	Develop new Homelessness Prevention Strategy and action plan	Oct 2026	Strategy developed and being presented at Cabinet on 2nd December 2026
	Review and refocus service to align with early prevention work and outcomes from the service	March 2027	New Head of Homelessness and Prevention and Housing Solution to review structure of the team to support prevention work.
	Work with private rented sector team to embed renters right act	March 2027	Increased capacity through the training of an apprentice to focus on breaches of the Renters' Rights framework, including illegal evictions. Internal referral pathways established to escalate cases for investigation. Landlord forum delivered in partnership with the NRLA, providing updates on the Renters' Rights Act implementation roadmap. Ongoing advice & support provided to local landlords and letting agents on legislative changes and best practice
	Commission our rough sleepers support services	March 2027	CAS-3 Procurement was approved at Cabinet. Commission cycle to begin. Due to delays with procurement and exemptions has been applied for the CAS3 to extend the contract with Stepping stones from 1st November 2026 to 31st December 2027. ABEN cabinet approved, waiting for availability with procurement. RSAP exemption completed in Aril 2026, wating for contract.
Provide safe and decent temporary accommodation	Deliver the bed and breakfast elimination plan	March 2027	Improved TA subsidy recovery by enabling claims on out-of-borough placements that were previously ineligible. Nightly rates have been renegotiated with B&B providers, and greater use of lease-and-repair and other sustainable accommodation options has reduced reliance on B&B and nightly paid accommodation
	Increase access to suitable and adequate temporary accommodation Deliver Local Authority Housing Fund	March 2027	LAHF3 - two purchases completed with a further five purchases agreed and going through conveyancing. LAHF 4 - several properties in the pipeline. Working with legal to

	rounds 3 and 4		explore the option of purchasing through auction as there are several good opportunities on the market.
	Increase support for sustainable move on from temporary accommodation	March 2027	Two dedicated Move-On Officers have been recruited to support sustainable move-on from Temporary Accommodation, providing targeted support with benefit maximisation, debt management, affordability, employment and access to private rented housing.
Review housing allocations and housing register	Reduce backlog of housing applications	March 2027	To reduce the backlog of housing applications, we employed an additional temporary member of staff whose primary role has been to focus on processing outstanding applications for two days each week. Through this targeted approach, alongside the dedication and commitment of the wider team, we have achieved a significant reduction in the backlog from 1,339 applications in 2025 to 218 at the present time
	Working in partnership review the allocations policy and make sure it is fit for purpose	March 2027	Allocations policy reviewed to include tied tenancies. Head of Homelessness and Prevention will assess scope of further review and use of Locator

List of Background Papers:-

RSH Consumer standards

Contact Details:-

Sian Grant, Director of Housing

Executive Director sign off Date:_____