classification:	Decision Type:
Open	Key

Report to:	Cabinet	**Date:** 02 December 2026
Subject:	Regulator for Social Housing Regulatory Judgement and Next Steps	
Report of	Cabinet Member for Housing Services	

Summary

1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the outcome of the recent housing regulatory inspection of Bury Housing Services carried out by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) over summer 2026 and to provide an update on the next steps.

2. The Council was advised by the Regulator on 22nd October 2026 that it had received a C3 rating with the judgement published on 11th November 2026. It was the Regulator's judgement that there were serious failings in how Bury Council was delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement was needed. A link to the judgement is attached at Appendix One.

3. At its feedback meeting on 22nd October, the Regulator noted the positive trajectory of the housing service since the Council took the management of the housing stock back in house. They also noted that plans were already underway to continue to improve performance in the identified areas of weakness.

4. The judgement provides external assurance on the direction of travel however the Council acknowledges that there is further work required to fully met the requirements of the standards and fulfil its aspiration to be a C1 rated provider.

Recommendation(s)

5. It is recommended that Cabinet:

   a. Note the outcome of the Regulator of Social Housing inspection for Bury Housing Services.
   b. Note the next steps in developing the Improvement Plan.
   c. Continue to provide oversight of the Improvement Plan and review progress on a timely basis.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

6. The recommendation is to ensure Cabinet is aware of the outcome of the inspection and to share the next steps.

Alternative options considered and rejected

7. No other options have been considered.

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Background

8. Following the Grenfell fire tragedy, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 brought in new powers for the RSH to carry out regular landlord inspections and the power to issue unlimited fines. In addition, the Act brought in reform of the following four Consumer Standards that aim to ensure that tenants have a safe, secure, and well-maintained homes, with clear communication and good service from the landlord:

- Safety and Quality Standard
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
- Tenancy Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard

9. In 2023, Bury Council made the decision to bring the management of its housing stock back into the council following concerns about how its ALMO (Six Town Housing) was manging the stock. This decision was subject to a test of opinion with the tenants who fully supported the proposed transfer of their homes back to Council management. This work was completed in February 2024, and a full permanent Housing leadership team was in place by November 2025.

10. The Council made the decision to bring the management of the housing stock back in house when it became clear that performance on key compliance issues was not accurate and it could be no longer be assured of the validity of the data. This position was also influenced by a self-referral to the RSH by STH Ltd about fire safety compliance. There was also a lack of triangulation with feedback from what tenants were telling us about service quality and their lived experience.

11. After the return to Council management a detailed self-assessment and a mock inspection revealed evidence that the service was not meeting requirements of the consumer standards or best practice in a number of areas including:

- Fire safety, electrical safety, and gas safety
- Anti-social behaviour management

- Complaints handling
- Repairs and maintenance
- Caretaking and cleaning

12. Since February 2024, the service has been working hard to put in place the fundamentals to ensure that the Council can deliver an excellent housing service. This has included improving data quality and performance reporting, strengthening key teams, and bringing in external support to provide assurance and guide improvement in key areas.

Regulatory Inspection Framework

13. 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 improvements made since bringing the stock back in house, the inspection took place from 20th – 22nd July 2026.

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

    a. 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.
    b. C2 – no failings but some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed.
    c. C3 – there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed.
    d. 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.

Bury Council Judgement

15. The Council was advised by the Regulator on 22nd October 2026 that it had received a C3 rating. It was the Regulator's judgement that there were serious failings in how Bury Council was delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement was needed.

16. 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. The judgement is linked in Appendix One. A summary of the judgement is provided below:

17. The outcomes of the regulatory judgement for each of the areas within the Safety and Quality standard are provided below:

    - Stock quality and decency – some weaknesses
    - Health and safety – serious failings
    - Repairs and maintenance – some weaknesses

- Damp and mould – serious failings
- Adaptations – serious failings

18. The outcomes of the regulatory judgement for each of the areas within the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard are provided below;

    - Diverse needs – some weaknesses
    - Engagement with tenants – serious failings
    - Service and performance information (including TSMs) – serious failings
    - Complaint handling – some weaknesses
    - Fairness and respect – some weaknesses

19. The outcomes of the regulatory Neighbourhood and Community standard are provided below:

    - Safety of shared spaces – not actively assessed but no issues found
    - Local co-operation – meeting expected outcomes
    - Anti-social behaviour and hate incidents – some weaknesses
    - Domestic Abuse – not actively assessed but no issues found

20. The Regulator judged that the Council was meeting expected standards for the overall Tenancy Standard.

21. The Regulator also provided more detailed feedback at the outcome meeting on 22nd October which is not included as part of the regulatory judgement. As part of this feedback they stated Bury Council had made significant progress in improving the housing service since it had been brought back in house and that they could see that fundamental changes had been put in place to bring the service closer to expected standards.

22. The Regulators were assured that Bury Council had a full understanding of the required outcomes and had improvement plans in place to address the issues but that the time of the inspection these plans were not yet embedded enough to show outcomes. They were assured that the Council had the leadership capacity and capability in place to continue to improve the service.

23. The Regulator also identified that data quality was a cross-cutting theme in the judgement and that it was not sufficiently robust to provide assurance. There was a specific ask that the Council looks at improving how data is audited and assure senior leaders and councillors of its accuracy. This should be linked to the upgrade of the Housing Management System and associated tasks to improve data quality and data governance.

24. Overall, they stated that the Inspection was reflective of a point in time, and they could see a positive trajectory of improvement which provides assurance that the Council will meet the requirements of the higher grades in the future, should current progress be maintained. The pace of that improvement will be

monitored through revised internal governance and through monthly review meetings with the Regulator.

The Council's Response

25. The Council accepts the finding of the Regulator and is committed to improving Housing Services to meet the expectations set out in the Consumer Standards and achieving the outcomes agreed with tenants through ongoing consultation on the vision for social housing.

26. As stated earlier in this report, the Council has been working to address longstanding problems since housing services returned but there is much more to do and these findings are already being used to accelerate improvement and provide a renewed focused on the issues that matter most to tenants.

27. Whilst still an area for improvement, a significant work has been undertaken against the **Safety and Quality Standard** including:

- Recruiting to a full, permanent compliance team which has been in place since February 2026
- Reviewing all compliance data to get to one version of the truth and introducing a new system to hold the data. Whilst work is still ongoing this has already led to improvement in data accuracy and accurate performance reporting.
- In February 2025 only 73% of the fire risk assessments had been completed. This is now at 100% compliance.
- Completing these assessments has increased the number of remedial actions however the latest data shows that the 2,800 actions reported to regulator in July has already been reduced to 2,424.
- There is a plan to address all high risk fire safety actions by the end of January 2027 and all other actions by the end of March 2027.
- In addition to the fire risk assessments, the service is now also 100% compliant on safety checks for lifts, asbestos and legionella
- Implementing the five year EICR checks to ensure compliance has increased from 86% to 97%.
- Gas Safety checks are at 99.85% with a strong no access process now in place.
- All remedial action identified as part of safety checks are now tracked through our compliance systems. Progress against remedial actions is reported monthly in housing portfolio to ensure oversight and assurance.

28. As part of setting new foundations for the Housing Service a data cleanse has been conducted of all information related to whether our homes meet the decent home standard to ensure it is accurate and correctly presented within the HRA 30-year business plan and associated capital programme. This has identified a more accurate picture of where homes may not meet the decent homes standard and where homes have had work that meet the decent

homes standard, but this had not been properly recorded. Where there were concerns about the data, additional decent homes surveys have been commissioned to verify the information and ensure accurate records.

29. During 2025/26 the service carried out a full review of our repairs and maintenance function and identified a number of key areas where it needed to improve. All repairs data and reporting was cleansed and reviewed to obtain a picture of performance that included both in house repairs and subcontractor repairs. Following this review and rapid response was put in place and has delivered a number of improvements including:

    - Reduction in the repairs backlog - in January 2026 there was a work in progress list of 6,272, By end of September 2026 this was within target at 1,434.
    - Improvements in communication with tenants about their repairs, including contacting every tenant once their repair is completed, has led to increased satisfaction and less call backs. All tenants who report dissatisfaction with their repair are now contacted to correct the issue.

30. Since STH was brought back in house, the service has made significant improvements in the caretaking and cleaning service including carrying out a full review of the service in consultation with tenants and putting in place a new service level agreement. As a result, satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained increased from 55.16% in 2024/25 to 68.95% in 2025/26, an increase of 13.79%.

31. In relation to the **Neighbourhood and Community Standard**, in December 2025 the Council commissioned Housemark to carry out a review of the Housing ASB service as it was failing to meet both tenant expectations and the requirements of the consumer standards. There were long standing issues with case handling and management, and a lack of consistency when following polices and procedure which had been picked up through an internal review of complaints and tenant feedback.

32. As a result of this review, an extensive improvement plan has been implemented. The impact has been significant improvements in ASB case management including meeting target timescales, completing more meaningful risk assessments, and improving communication with the tenants, all of which were recognised by the Regulator as progress towards standards. As part of the implementation of these changes the Council has committed to attaining the Housemark accreditation for the ASB service.

33. In addition to the ASB review, Housemark were also commissioned to carry out a review of Housing’s complaint service due to a recognition of a poor complaint handling culture and the number of complaints that were being received compared to the other landlords. As a result of implementing the recommendations from this review, the number of complaints has increased from 62 complaints in 2025/26 to 180 complaints so far for 2026/27. This is much more aligned to sector norms. This increase in complaints shows increasing transparency and a culture of honesty which will continue to be

develop as the service embeds learnings from these complaints and feedback.

34. In relation to the **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard**, the Council recognises the extent of work required to regain the trust and confidence of tenants and to ensure that the voice of tenants is genuinely heard within the development of housing policy and the delivery of services.

35. Significant work is already underway with Housing Officers and the Tenant Engagement Service to review current structures and opportunities for engagement and to considerable enhance the range of ways in which the service interacts with tenants and hears the full range of lived experience from across all estates and types of housing.

36. During their visit, the regulator commented on the positive addition of Estate Action Days to the programme of engagement, and the plans to include ward walks for every estate over the next twelve months. Understanding more about tenants and their needs is a key commitment within the services Improvement Plan and the first in a series of Housing Engagement Days took place on the 10th November where over 1,000 properties were visited and over 400 visits completed.

37. The results of the judgement have been shared widely with tenants and have been discussed at the Housing Advisory Board which includes Tenant Representatives. At the session it was agreed that a full route and branch review of tenant engagement be undertaken with tenants themselves co-producing a new governance approach, using the findings of the recently completed TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) review as the starting point. An external facilitator has been appointed to support the review to ensure it is done independently, transparently, and robustly. The first workshop was held on the 23rd November with over 20 tenants attending and contributing to the design of the review.

38. Whilst the Council recognises there is a lot more to do against these standards, some signs of improvement are being seen within the Tenant Satisfaction measures. In terms of feeling secure in their homes, the percentage of tenants satisfied that their home is safe increased from 69.94% to 75.04%. The percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs has increased from 75% in 2024/25 to 82% to 2025/26, whilst those satisfied that their home is well maintained increased from 66.78% to 71.23%. Overall, the percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service their landlord provides has increased 69% in 2024/25 to 73% in 2025/26.

Communication of the Regulatory Judgement

39. A number of communication activities took place following the immediate publication of the judgement including a briefing to all housing staff and all councillors were invited to a meeting to discuss the outcome on the day of release.

40. All tenants have been informed of the outcome via a letter sent through the digital messaging platform CX. The same letter and accompanying questions and answers has also been sent by post to all tenants. The judgement also went live on the Council's website alongside the letter to tenants and a number of questions and answers about what the judgement means for tenant. Once the Regulatory Improvement Plan has been agreed with the RSH this will also be published and share with tenants.

Regulatory Judgement Improvement Plan

41. As Bury Council have been graded as a C3 there will be 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.

42. Bury Housing Services already has a substantial action plan in place to improve services. This action plan has been reviewed to ensure it covers all the feedback and areas for improvement from the regulatory judgement and the more detailed verbal feedback provided by the regulator. Specific milestones and linked resources have been assigned to each action to ensure pace and accountability across the service.

43. 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 Cabinet, HAB, staff and tenants.

Links with the Corporate Priorities:
Please summarise how this links to the Let's Do It Strategy.

44. Improving housing services for tenants is a key part of Bury Council's Let's Do It! Strategy both to improve services for all residents of Bury and to ensure the tenants voice is at the heart of service delivery and design. The regulatory judgement and associated improvement plan support us on our journey to this vision. It provides a sense check that we are heading in the right direction and that we have moved significant improvement since the management of the housing stock was brough back in house. We will use the regulatory judgement to continue to improve housing services for tenants.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

45. This is an update to Cabinet and as such no equality impact analysis is required. Future actions and activities arising from this update may require equality impact assessments where appropriate

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Environmental Impact and Considerations:

None as a result of this report

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Failure to meet the consumer standards	Housing Services improvement plan Monthly meetings with the RSH Improved internal audit to provide assurance on data New housing management system to improve data quality and governance
Risk to Bury Council's reputation	Press release and management of communication of the day of publication Information and questions and answers shared with tenants and members to address concerns

Procurement Implications:

46. Procurement will continue working with Housing to implement the required contracts to meet the relevant standards

Legal Implications:

47. Following an inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing ("RSH"), the Council received a Consumer Grade C3 judgement, indicating serious failings in parts of the Consumer Standards and that significant improvement is required.

48. Cabinet has strategic oversight of the Council's response and improvement programme, including monitoring progress, ensuring appropriate governance and resources are in place, and receiving assurance that the actions necessary to achieve compliance are being implemented.

49. The Council is a registered provider of social housing and is subject to the consumer regulatory regime established under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. The matters identified in the judgement relate to compliance with existing statutory and regulatory obligations, including those concerning tenant health and safety, housing condition, repairs and maintenance, tenant engagement, accessibility of information, complaints handling and service performance.

50. The recommendations within this report support the Council's ongoing improvement programme in response to the RSH judgement. Continued implementation and monitoring of improvement actions will assist the Council in demonstrating compliance with the Consumer Standards, strengthening assurance arrangements, and reducing regulatory risk. The RSH has confirmed that it is not currently proposing to exercise enforcement powers but will continue intensive engagement and monitoring of the Council's

progress. Failure to secure and maintain compliance may result in increased regulatory intervention in the future.

51. This report forms part of the Council's governance response to the judgement and supports Cabinet in discharging its strategic oversight responsibilities in relation to the Council's landlord function and compliance with the Consumer Standards

Financial Implications:

52. The report outlines the findings of the Regulator of Social Housing Judgement for the council, the below explains and identifies any financial implications arising from such judgement.

53. There is a detailed 30-year HRA Business Plan which underpins the long-term financial sustainability of the Housing Revenue Account and provides for the investment required to deliver service improvement and regulatory compliance. Over the next three years, the plan includes a significant capital investment programme c.£60m, focused on improving the condition of the housing stock and supporting progress towards the Decent Homes Standard.

54. Financial resources have been incorporated within both the revenue and capital plans to support delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan which will support in addressing the actions arising from the regulatory judgement. Work continues with Housing officers to strengthen financial planning and management, aligning resources with the improvement plan.

55. Whilst there will be ongoing financial pressures associated with delivering the improvement programme, resources are reflected within the current HRA Business Plan assumptions and will continue to be monitored through the Council's established budget monitoring and business planning processes.

56. The Council's ability to fund additional investment within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is financially constrained by the requirement for the HRA to remain self-financing and sustainable over the long term. As a result, the Housing Improvement Plan must be delivered within the affordability parameters of the existing 30-year HRA Business Plan, ensuring that investment priorities are balanced against the need to maintain a financially resilient, non-deficit business plan. This will require careful prioritisation of resources, robust financial management and ongoing review of investment assumptions to ensure regulatory compliance and service improvements are delivered in a sustainable and affordable manner.

Appendices:

Please list any appended documents (please save these as clearly labelled separate documents in the Teams folder).

Appendix One: Regulatory judgement

Background papers:
Please list any background documents to this report and include a hyperlink where possible.

Frequently Asked Questions - https://www.bury.gov.uk/housing/housing-services/about-us/improving-council-housing-services-in-bury/housing-inspection-frequently-asked-questions

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
TMC	Tenant Management Cooperative
ALMO	Arm's Length Management Organisation
RSH	Regulator for Social Housing
TPAS	Tenant Participation Advisory Service