

SCRUTINY REVIEW: THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS TO THE COUNCIL AND RESIDENTS OF STOCKPORT: SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Main types of Social Housing Provider

The following table has been provided at the request of the Scrutiny Review sub group to assist in the understanding of the main types of social housing providers, and the accountability arrangements for each type of provider. Please note, these are the strict legal/governance positions in relation to each type of organisation.

Housing Provider	Council enforcement (Housing Act 2004) – excludes Decent Homes & wider regulation)	Council control (allocations, operation, rents, finance)	Supports Council & Borough Plan/objectives	National Regulator Of Social Housing
Council	No	Yes (Direct control)	Yes	Yes
ALMO	No	Yes (Part direct, part through contract/SLA)	Yes (through Delivery Plan)	Yes
LSVT	Yes	No	No	Yes
Housing Association	Yes	No	No	Yes

LSVT (Large Scale Voluntary Transfer) organisations were generally set up by councils specifically to purchase council stock within defined LA boundaries, following stock options appraisals (required by Government for all stock holding council post 1997) and a positive tenant vote. Examples include New Charter in Tameside, or Bolton at Home in Bolton. Many of these have now merged with other RPs or expanded to no longer operate within the originating LA area, for example New Charter is now Jigsaw, with housing stock across several LA areas.

In this context, housing association has been used to describe the ‘traditional’ housing associations pre 1997, with housing stock they had developed usually with the aid of government grant. Since 1997, many housing associations have since purchased housing that had been built and managed by councils, for example MSV (as Mosscore) purchased the 8 small Manchester City Council ‘overspill’ estates within Stockport. This has led to a ‘blurring’ between pure LSVT established RPs and RPs not established to work in defined areas

In Stockport, through the SHP arrangements, the Council does have significant influence over the Partner RPs, for example through the nomination arrangements,

and Partners are linked in and committed to support the Council and Borough Plan/objectives. However good a housing provider is, tenants and relevant support service providers (for example GMP or Adult Social Care) will have the need to contact and require repairs or additional help and support from landlords. Whilst the strict legal requirements may be limited, through the Partnership, the council can also exert wider influence over the Partner RPs through the strong partnership working and senior contacts at each organisation. This ensures that Partners go significantly beyond what may be legally required, and will work to support the council and our wider partners for the benefit of the tenants/customers.

The quote below is taken from an unsolicited email received by Strategic Housing in September 2023 from a team manager in Adult Social Care, and follows contact with the senior representative from a Partner RP

I just wanted to thank you for escalating our concerns with xxxxxxxxxxxx, we have had 3 meetings with them – all very positive – and it feels as though we are in a much better position in terms of communication and collaborative working.

The manager also confirmed in a follow up to this email the positive outcomes of working with the Partner RPs on the SHIP project – the SHIP project is looking at current and future demand/provision of supported housing, and through the Stockport Housing Partnership, the Partner RPs are working with officers in Adult Social Care to support the project.

Regulator of Social Housing

This national regulator operates under the objectives set out in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (as amended) and regulates registered providers of low cost and social rented housing (local councils, ALMOs, RPs) and private 'not for profit' registered providers.

For several years, the approach by the regulator was generally 'hands off' and 'reactive' leading to some criticism over its ability to properly control housing providers for the benefit of residents. Following a number of high profile cases, including Grenfell and the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, there has been a full review, and complete change of approach, with the focus now squarely on customer involvement/protection and a changed approach to regulation including proactive inspections from April 2024

The links below provide details on the regulator, the standards that are applied and the consultation on the new consumer standards to be introduced early in 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing/about>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-consumer-standards>

Stockport Council Housing Option Appraisal

Section 2.4 and 2.5 in the previous report set out the chronology of the Council's decision making process in establishing and then renewing the contractual arrangements in 2015 with a new Management Agreement and Articles of Association. The links below follow the relevant decision reports after scrutiny as they were considered by the then Executive. The option appraisal process was undertaken in consultation with, and the Management Agreement was approved by the Homes & Communities Agency (now Homes England) as regulator of the process at that time.

- 1) Executive decision regarding methodology to carry out option appraisal (17 December 2013)

<https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=117&MId=5334>

- 2) Executive decision regarding progress, and approval of evaluation criteria (15 July 2014)

<https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=117&MId=5745>

- 3) Executive decision regarding the options outcome and approval to offer a new management agreement (11 November 2014). This report included details of the role of the Independent Tenants Advisor and the customer consultation on the proposed options

<https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=117&MId=5756>

- 4) Executive decision regarding management agreement & articles of association (21 July 2015) – This report addresses all the key principles, that is, how SHG is accountable and what is expected of SHG. The agreement then runs for 27 years from 2015, though the Council can terminate if SHG do not perform/abide by the agreements.

<https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=117&MId=5781>