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SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL - THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS TO THE COUNCIL AND RESIDENTS OF STOCKPORT

Meeting: 21 September 2023
At: 3.15 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Dena Ryness (Chair) in the chair; Councillors John Taylor and Claire Vibert.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers to declare any interests which they have in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interest was declared:

| <u>Officer</u> | <u>Interest</u> |
|----------------|--|
| Mark Glynn | Agenda item 3 'Scrutiny Review: the accountability of social housing providers to the council and residents of Stockport' as the accountable person for Stockport Homes stock. |

2 SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL PROCEDURE RULES

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Review Panel Procedure Rules for the purpose of conducting the review be adopted.

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

A representative of the Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided background information to guide and inform the scope of the review.

Mark Glynn (Director of Place Management, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC)) and Andy Kippax (Strategic Housing Lead, SMBC) attended the meeting to respond to questions from members.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- The report described the social housing provider arrangements in place in Stockport and the influence the council had over their management and stock investment and development decisions. The report set out the long-standing partnership arrangements that had been in place in Stockport for many years, as well as the rationale for the partnership.

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- The council as a social housing provider was confirmed following an options appraisal in 2014, leading to the establishment of Stockport Homes Group (SHG), and the accountability of which lies with the council.
- Registered providers (RP's) also operated in Stockport and were independent of the council, with each of them operating more widely than Stockport; the council maintained close local links with the RP's despite this.
- In relation to RP's, the national regulator for social housing set the standards for RP housing. SMBC worked closely with RP's and this strong partnership arrangement enabled a certain amount of influence towards RPs. RP's worked closely with the council to provide accommodation for homeless people, as well as contributing 50% of the cost of adaptations to their properties for people in need of home adaptations. Council officers met with directors of the RP's four times a year, and separately around developments. Enforcement action by the council was rare owing to the strong partnership arrangements in place. RP's were keen to work closely with the council around issues, which included but was not limited to, damp and mould and anti-social behaviour.
- A report was drafted annually to review the partnership arrangements and consider the overall development capacity of the partnership to ensure that partners were delivering what the council needed to deliver.
- It was agreed that SHG should be included within the scope of the review given its size and importance as a social housing provider.
- Members discussed the scope of the review, which included but was not limited to:
 - To gain an understanding of where social housing providers are accountable and the current mechanisms for this accountability for each of the different types of social housing providers in Stockport. It was suggested that a simplified table would enable members to see where accountability was strong, and any gaps across the piece that could be scrutinised further.
 - To gain an understanding the risks of lack of accountability.
 - Examples of social housing providers operating in three other local authority areas to gather learning.
 - Over the course of the review, to invite other stakeholders such as Greater Manchester Police (GMP) (who worked closely with housing teams) to speak to the panel to get their views on the accountability of social housing providers to residents.
- It was suggested that clearly categorising the social housing providers in Stockport and identifying local RPs and their geography could also help to inform the scope of the review.
- It was felt that the views of GMP would be particularly useful given their work around anti-social behaviour.
- It was noted that the national regulator of social housing had drafted a customer focussed set of standards and would begin inspecting RP's from next year.
- It was felt important to understand the lines of accountability e.g., to elected members, the council more generally, and tenants (including tenant's associations), of the other three local authority models.

RESOLVED – That a final scoping report be drafted using the existing background report, and submitted to members for consideration and agreement.

4 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 4.25 pm