



Report to: Communities Committee, 20th July 2022

Report of: Corporate Director – Operations, Homes & Communities

Subject: ANNUAL PLATFORM HOUSING GROUP UPDATE

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Committee note the contents of this report; and

1.2 That the Committee instructs officers to work with Platform Housing Group to develop a new local framework to support greater collaboration in Worcester.

2. Background

2.1 On 31st March 2004, Worcester City Council undertook a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of its Council Housing stock to a newly formed Registered Provider (RP), Worcester Community Housing Limited following consultation with its tenants.

2.2 Worcester Community Housing thereby became the new landlord and took on responsibility and liability for the housing assets from Worcester City Council and operated exclusively within Worcester City

2.3 In 2014, Worcester Community Housing combined with Festival Housing Group (which included the previous LSVT organisations from Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils) to become Fortis Living.

2.4 Platform Housing Group began operating on 1st October 2018 bringing together Fortis Living and Waterloo Housing Group. The Group now own around 47,000 homes across 67 Local Authority areas extending from the Welsh borders to the Lincolnshire Coast.

2.5 Platform Housing Groups highest densities of stock across their portfolio lie in Worcestershire and Lincolnshire with approximately 5,700 homes in Worcester including leaseholders which accounts for around 68% of all social housing stock in the City making it the largest provider by some margin though there are a number of other RP's operating within the City.

3. Platform Housing Group in Worcester City

3.1 Upon transfer of stock through the LSVT, Worcester City Council and Worcester Community Housing Limited entered into a Transfer Agreement which set out the terms and conditions of the transfer.

3.2 Worcester City Council does not hold any statutory powers or control over Platform Housing Group but has strong and collaborative working relationship across the organisation at both the strategic and operational level.

- 3.3 As a Registered Provider, beyond its own internal governance arrangements, Platform Housing Group is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) which promotes a viable, efficient and well governed social housing sector.
- 3.4 The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper provides the framework to be overseen by the RSH and sets out what every social housing resident should expect including:
1. Being safe in your home
 2. To know how your landlord is performing
 3. To have complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
 4. To be treated with respect
 5. To have your voice heard by your landlord
 6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
 7. To be supported to take your first step to ownership
- 3.5 Given the dominance of Platform Housing Group as the primary provider of social housing in the City, Worcester City Council are reliant on strong working relationships to support in the delivery and response of statutory services including homelessness, allocations through the housing register and community safety.
- 3.6 In addition, Platform Housing Group work collaboratively on a range of other initiatives including community engagement work, neighbourhood walkabouts as well as supporting other organisations in the City such as Age UK and their dementia cafes.
- 3.7 There is no formal agreement in place in respect of performance monitoring and reporting however Platform Housing Group report on their performance quarterly to Worcester City Council which includes a number of performance measures including timescales for void turnarounds, number of new properties developed, repairs and customer satisfaction.
- 3.8 Although Platform Housing Group's head office is located in Solihull, it retains a local focus of resources to its tenants in Worcester including the provision of housing maintenance services, neighbourhood officers and community engagement officers.
- 3.9 Platform Housing Group offer a range of support to their customers including practical tenancy support, welfare support and income maximisation. In addition, they have a wellbeing fund of £1.7 million to support with financial hardship in 2022/23 with £284,000 allocated to Worcester tenants in 2021/22.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

None identified in this report.

4.2 Legal and Governance Implications

None identified in this report.

4.3 Risk Implications

None identified in this report.

4.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

None identified in this report.

4.5 Equality Implications

None identified in this report.

4.6 Human Resources Implications

None identified in this report.

4.7 Health and Safety Implications

None identified in this report.

Ward(s): **All Wards**
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Background Papers: **None**