Scrutiny 2nd Year Review of the Delivery of the ForHousing Strategy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Following a Scrutiny exercise looking at the year 1 delivery of the ForHousing Strategy, Scrutiny recommended a further review after year 2 delivery.

1.2 The focus of the exercise was to provide assurance to the ForHousing Board and Executive Management Team that:

- Actions from the previous review 'ForHousing Strategy Year 1 Delivery' have been delivered
- Delivery of the strategic roadmap can be demonstrated through clear activities and projects and that there is effective oversight of this
- Performance reporting demonstrates accountability for delivery of the strategy

2. Scope of the Exercise

2.1 Scrutiny Partners had:

- an overview of the work carried out to date to deliver the strategy and supporting strategies
- a deeper dive into the delivery of three key projects:
  - Customer Census
  - Implementation of the New Void Standard
  - Embedding Improved Approach to Value for Money

3. Methodology

3.1 Desktop work was carried out which examined the following information:

- ForHousing Strategy
- Homes Strategy
- Customer Strategy
- Resources Strategy
- ForHousing Strategy Roadmap
- Customer Strategy Year 2 Closure report
- Homes Strategy Year 2 Closure report
- Resource Strategy Year 2 Closure report
- Knowing Our Tenants Closure report
- New Void Standard
- Value for Money Framework

3.2 To assess the successful delivery of the strategies, Scrutiny picked a project from the strategic roadmap for each strategy and carried out focus groups with:

- Customer Census – Rebecca Whittle, Regional Director
- Implementation of New Void Standard – Lee Ferendenus, Head of Maintenance and Marie Thompson, Head of Customer Connect Hub
- Embedding Improved Approach to Value for Money – Anestis Gaitanidis, Finance Director

4. Findings

4.1 Actions from the Previous Review

Scrutiny had made 11 recommendations, 2 of which they had agreed would not be delivered. Scrutiny were satisfied that all remaining 9 actions had been delivered. This included an action to carry out this review. Scrutiny requested the closure report for the Knowing Our Tenants project as part of this exercise and were satisfied this action had been completed.

4.2 Delivery of Strategic Roadmap

Scrutiny were pleased with the progress of delivery of the roadmap with all but two of the milestones for year two having been met and progress having been made on the outstanding milestones.

Scrutiny were concerned that not all of the strategic measures had been met but felt the reports gave a clear explanation for the reasons behind this. Scrutiny have requested a further update on performance against these measures for the latest reports produced.

4.3 Delivery of the strategic roadmap can be demonstrated through clear activities and projects and that there is effective oversight of this

Scrutiny found the projects and activities contained within the strategic roadmap were clear and demonstrated how the strategy was being delivered. The reporting was clear and Scrutiny were satisfied that there was effective oversight of the delivery.

Having looked at the closure reports Scrutiny were clear about the accountability for delivery and the reporting mechanisms.

4.4 Customer data census

Scrutiny found that the programme had been thorough and had been delivered very well. The project was well monitored and reported appropriately. Of particular positive note:

- Additional resourcing to support delivery of the project by taking three additional members of staff to ensure that there was no impact on the tenant experience when using the Customer Connect Hub (CCH)
- Delivery of the project did not adversely impact staff capacity in the CCH
- Quick identification of the impact on staff wellbeing of just delivering the tenant census and training all staff to undertake the task to support diversification of tasks without having an impact on customer experience
- Making three attempts to make contact with tenants on different days and at different times of the day to make every effort to contact every tenant
- Adapting the process to include texting tenants in the morning, advising to expect a call from ForHousing in case this was the reason people were not answering the phone
- Changing the housing management system to create pop up reminders when accessing a tenants account to ensure that information is kept up to date (regarding information that ForHousing doesn't have, or the update trigger has elapsed)
- Fortnightly reconciliation to ensure accurate record keeping

- Updating and using tenant's communication preferences and adapting service delivery to meet tenant's need (such as changes to the 'school hours appointment')

4.5 Implementation of new void standard

The implementation of the new void standard was welcomed by Scrutiny who feel it will make a real difference in helping tenants to start their tenancy well. Of positive note was:

- Creation of a demonstration property to show the expected void standard as a training aide for operatives
- Adding an additional 2.5 million to the budget to improve the tenant experience, and not driven by complaints and dissatisfaction
- Pre the new standard 25% of terminations were due to the condition of the property and this has decreased as of December 2025 to 2%
- Changes in how void works are managed with more responsibility sitting with ForHousing from inspection, putting out works and post inspecting voids
- Positive impact for colleagues as they are now confident in showing a prospective tenant around a property

Scrutiny were surprised that ForHousing don't currently have reporting in place to monitor reasons for refusals of properties but understand this will be addressed with the new allocations app that is being introduced.

Scrutiny appreciate the difficulty in assessing impact on the tenant experience as people are not in a position to refuse properties and therefore would have accepted without the changes to the void standard. Scrutiny appreciate that the driver for this was to improve the customer experience.

Scrutiny were pleased that the new void standard had been created in response to customer feedback.

4.6 Embed improved approach to Value for Money

- Scrutiny were pleased that the key driver was ensuring that ForHousing are in a position to provide safe homes for tenants. Particular positive findings were:
- looking at tenant 360 (looking at all the information we have got to pull up a series of key indicators)
- addition of the colleague tenant working group to the formal engagement structure which gives a unique perspective

5. Summary of Findings

5.1 Scrutiny were satisfied that the action plan from the previous strategy scrutiny exercise had been delivered.

5.2 It is clear from the roadmap, the year-end reports and the focus groups that customer satisfaction and the impact to customers are the main drivers for the delivery of the strategy.

5.3 Scrutiny were concerned that not all the strategic measures had not met their target.

5.4 Performance reporting is thorough and commentary gives a clear indication of delivery of actions as well as mitigating measures for poor performance

5.5 Scrutiny were pleased with the approach taken and the amount of work undertaken to deliver the customer census. There were several positive highlights including the prioritising resources for the project and having a flexible approach to delivery, ensuring that quick action was taken to support both colleagues and customers.

5.6 The implementation of the new void standard was welcomed by Scrutiny who feel it will make a real difference in helping tenants to start their tenancy well. The budget that had been allocated to delivery was a particular positive finding, as was the fact that the new standard was driven by the desire to deliver a better customer experience. Scrutiny were pleased with the positive impact for staff from ForHousing as well as for incoming tenants.

5.7 Scrutiny were pleased that the key driver for the new approach for value for money was ensuring that ForHousing are in a position to provide safe homes for tenants.

6. Recommendations

1. Scrutiny to have a demonstration of the new allocations app to understand the process.
2. Scrutiny to receive updated performance against the strategic measures.
3. Scrutiny to carry out a further review at the end of year 3 delivery of the Strategy