

# ***Report to the Cabinet***

***Report reference: C-047-2023/24***

***Date of meeting: 18 March 2024***



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio: Housing and Strategic Health Partnerships (Cllr Holly Whitbread)**

**Subject: Update on the Housing Asset Management Strategy**

**Responsible Officer: Surjit Balu, Interim Director for Housing and Property  
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## **1. Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

1. To approve the outline EFDC 2024-2029 Housing Asset Management Strategy – attached at Appendix 1

## **2. Executive Summary:**

Our Asset Management Strategy sets out seven main interrelated priorities and sets of actions for the effective management of the Council's housing assets.

The document provides an over-arching framework for how we will carry out all aspects of our work, from day-to-day repairs, to works required to keep our homes safe, to planned programmes of component replacement, through to estate management and regeneration.

Our arrangements with Qualis Group - a wholly owned multidisciplinary company of the Council, are fundamental to us being able to deliver the range of well designed, expertly informed, high-quality services our residents need and that we want to provide.

In October 2023 the Council appointed Ark Consultancy to assist us with the development of our Housing Asset Management Strategy.

The deliverables of the project are:

- A **Position Statement** setting out the strengths, weaknesses, and areas of focus for the management of EFDC's housing assets
- A **Strategy Document** that sets out the position we aim to achieve by the end of the five-year strategy period and what we need to do to get from our current position to our target position.
- An **Action Plan** with timescales to deliver the asset management strategy.
- **12 Monthly Reviews** of our progress for the duration of the asset management strategy and updates to the action planned as required.

The Position Statement is based on research including:

- A stock tour to provide Ark with a general understanding of the characteristics and issues of EFDC's housing stock
- A survey of tenants on their priorities

- Focus group sessions with staff in the Asset Management team, internal customers within EFDC (Peers) and staff at Qualis Property Services
- Benchmarking of EFDC's asset management data
- One-to-one interviews with EFDC officers on their specialist areas

Ark Consultancy have supported EFDC to draft an outline asset management strategy which is attached at Appendix 1. EFDC and Ark will continue to work jointly to develop a more detailed asset management strategy and supporting action plan.

### 3. Report:

#### 3.1 Drivers for Change

To develop this strategy and to build a **better and stronger** approach to asset management, we have considered the following set of drivers for change for social housing providers:

- Building safety & compliance – addressing new rules through new roles and new relationships and meeting the requirements of enhanced levels of regulation.
- Zero carbon 2050 – putting in place retrofit programmes that incorporate energy efficiency and renewable technology, supported by new skills & supply chains.
- Increased focus on existing stock quality & desirability – tackling damp & mould, other hazards, disrepair & meeting a set of fit for the future standards.
- Customer excellence – developing a culture of openness and respect, reflecting the tenant 'voice' with genuine involvement and input and effective management of complaints and redress.
- New homes delivery – supporting the delivery of additional homes for affordable/social rent through our asset management work.
- Placemaking – taking a broader view of home & neighbourhood to deliver better opportunity and address physical & mental health (green spaces, walkability, crime & ASB)
- Asset performance - understanding stock condition, using data-driven active asset management practices to evolve the housing portfolio.

The strategy has taken into consideration key data including; stock type and profile, responsive repairs, planned programmes, compliance, stock turnover and spend to mention but a few of the headlines.

#### 3.2 Challenges

- Designing a whole organisation approach where Qualis and the Council work together to meet shared objectives
- Providing safe homes that meet regulatory requirements
- Repairs and investment
- Improving the quality and suitability of the homes and services we provide
- Improving the quality and success of the places and neighbourhoods we manage
- Effective use of data
- Energy efficiency
- Dynamic portfolio management
- Improving the Customer Experience
- Effectively resourcing our work

### 3.3 Asset Management Strategy - Strategic Priorities

The draft outline asset management strategy is aligned to the EFDC Corporate Plan and the Housing Strategy. The proposed priorities for the housing asset management strategy are:

1. Stronger voices.
2. Better data and decision-making.
3. Better repair and maintenance.
4. Better homes.
5. Better places.
6. Better value for money.
7. Stronger teams, partnerships, and resources.

Each priority is described in more detail in the attached outline strategy and, the key actions/deliverables are set out in each of the seven sections.

These actions are to be further refined following comments from Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. These actions will then form part of a detailed and time-scaled action plan that Officers will develop with Ark during February/March 2024.

#### **4. Scrutiny Comments**

The draft outline housing asset management strategy was considered by the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 5 March 2024. The Committee were supportive of the strategy. The Committee requested that the detailed Housing Asset Management Strategy incorporates the following:

- Correction of typographical errors and clearer captioning of figures
- Description of the functions of the Strategic Asset Management Group and the Future Homes Group
- Addresses tackling anti-social behaviour
- Addresses the service we provide to leaseholders

The Communities Scrutiny Committee asked to review the action plan once it is prepared, and to be updated on the subsequent 12-monthly reviews.

#### **5. Resource Implications:**

Strategy development - Stakeholders attended workshops, completed surveys and other activities to develop a co-created strategy. This was provided within existing resources.

The final draft of the strategy will recommend the resource requirements for its implementation and for maintaining services to the required levels.

#### **6. Legal and Governance Implications:**

It is good practice to have a strategy, and the Regulator of Social Housing is likely to view favourably housing providers with a sound asset management strategy. However, there are no legal or governance requirements for EFDC to have a housing asset management strategy.

#### **7. Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

Safe and clean environments, together with energy efficient homes, will be key objectives in ensuring the homes we provide are places where people want to live and want to stay.

## **8. Consultation / Scrutiny Undertaken:**

There has been consultation of tenants and staff in the development of the strategy so far.

### **Background Papers:**

None.

### **Risk Management:**

The major risk is that the strategy is ineffective in enabling us to make the changes needed to ensure EFDC's housing stock performs at the best possible level. This has been mitigated through detailed briefing, thorough the selection process to appoint a consultant that has a good track record as specialist skillset. The co-creative approach to the strategy development has enabled ownership by staff, thus providing us with the best opportunity for successful implementation and delivery of the strategy.

### **Equality:**

An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out prior to the adoption of the Housing Asset Management Strategy.