

**HOUSING & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL -
18 JUNE 2025**

Proposed Adoption of a Housing Landlord Strategy (2025-2030) with Reference to The HRA Business Plan

Purpose	<p>To purpose of the Housing Landlord Strategy is to ensure the Council has a clear transparent approach to the delivery of its Housing Landlord Services and its investment plans over the next five years.</p> <p>Once adopted by the Council’s Cabinet, the Housing Landlord Strategy will offer a holistic suite of service commitments and information, which set out the landlord ‘service offer’ and how we shape, engage, and improve our services for tenants, leaseholders and local communities going forward.</p>
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>The Housing Landlord Strategy is a ‘new’ strategy to ensure Members, Officers, and Tenants agree and understand the vision for the service and that progress towards its achievement can be monitored by these groups, other stakeholders, and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) as required.</p> <p>The Housing Landlord Strategy will be a public facing document for the Department’s “service offer” including our investment plans for our housing stock and building new “affordable” homes. The strategy culminates in an action plan for improvement in all our Landlord and associated housing functions.</p> <p>Whilst it is not a legal requirement to have a Housing Landlord Strategy, it captures the context and journey in NDFC becoming an “aspirational landlord” and sets out a road map to achieve operational excellence in meeting the needs and aspirations of our tenants.</p>
Recommendation(s)	Following consideration:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel support the adoption of the draft Housing Landlord Strategy 2025-2030 and offer feedback on the draft strategy as presented at Appendix 1. 2. That the Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel delegate minor amendments to the Assistant Director – Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness. 3. That the Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommend the draft Housing Landlord Strategy follows on for adoption to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet – 6 August 2025 • Public Consultation • EMT – proposed final version. • Cabinet – final sign-off. 4. That the Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel formally note the agreed investment plans inclusive of our existing Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget commitments as made public within this draft Housing Landlord Strategy and at Appendix 2.
<p>Reasons for recommendation(s)</p>	<p>The Housing Landlord Strategy identifies the ways the Council intends to meet the RSH’s consumer standards and work with tenants, leaseholders, and relevant partner organisations to evolve and develop all our landlord services towards excellence.</p> <p>It is needed to take account of the regulatory changes, rising tenant expectations, and best practice that have evolved in the housing sector since the production of the existing Tenancy Policy in 2017, which is a closely related document but serves a different purpose.</p>

	<p>The time period of the proposed Housing Landlord Strategy covers both those of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the first four-year inspection timetable of the Regulator of Social Housing which commenced in April 2024.</p> <p>The Housing Landlord Strategy is for final Cabinet approval with a revised Tenancy Policy coming to a later EMT and Housing Panel.</p> <p>The draft Housing Landlord Strategy, once approved, will serve as a positive context statement and public reference document for a wide variety of audiences as outlined. It also makes transparent our investment plans for improving our existing homes and commitment to build new “affordable” homes to meet local housing needs.</p> <p>This report provides the Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel with an opportunity to agree the proposal to adopt a new Housing Landlord Strategy and comment on the draft document.</p> <p>Other options considered</p> <p>1. Do not produce and adopt a Landlord Strategy.</p> <p>This option is not recommended, it is good practice to have a Housing Landlord Strategy to ensure that Officers, Members and Tenants fully understand the council’s priorities and objectives in relation to delivering landlord services now and in the future.</p>
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Steve Davies – Housing and Homelessness
Strategic Director(s)	Richard Knott – Housing and Communities
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Introduction and background

1. New Forest District Council is the largest social housing provider in the district currently managing over 5,200 properties. Nevertheless, social housing remains a scarce resource which must be allocated fairly to those in housing need and demand always far exceeds supply.
2. At any one time, we have around two thousand households on our housing register who qualify for social housing. The Council therefore remains committed to providing social housing as it plays an invaluable role in providing homes which are affordable for local people and enables them to establish and sustain roots within our local communities.
3. It is also evident that consumer expectations are changing and increasing. There is intense focus on property condition, tenant experience and landlord accountability across the housing landscape. This has increased oversight and scrutiny of the social housing sector from the media, the Housing Ombudsman and the RSH.
4. In effect, council stock holding landlords like NFDC and their housing association partners increasingly face the challenge of ensuring they get the basic functions of providing safe, warm, and secure homes right, whilst also contributing to the overall wellbeing of tenants, adapting services to their vulnerabilities and the wider community.
5. Whilst it is expected that NFDC will be dissolved into a wider unitary authority under the government's local government reorganisation (LGR) mandate at some point, the proposed Housing Landlord Strategy sets out a clear statement and approach we intend to take in delivering our Landlord Services over the next five years in accordance with our Corporate Plan, our ambitions and values.
6. It is now timely to present a draft Housing Landlord Strategy and update our current Tenancy Policy (2017) having analysed the defining issues shaping our current operating environment. That is alongside the structural changes that LGR will bring and the impactful regulatory changes as we go forward on our journey of learning and continuous improvement in our landlord services.

Corporate plan priorities

7. This strategy establishes our vision for Council-owned social housing within the New Forest and the contribution it will make in achieving the ambitions of the Corporate Plan 2024-28 including:

- *Priority 2: Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives. The Corporate Plan states that delivery of this priority will be supported by the increasing the supply and delivery of new "affordable homes" through the planning system and by the council landlord building them itself.*
 - *Priority 3: Meeting Housing Needs – as above, but additionally in relation to the number of council homes achieving Energy Performance Certification band C and percentage scores for the 5 safety and compliance Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).*
8. The draft Housing Landlord Strategy sets out the Council's ambition to be an aspirational landlord, going beyond the minimum statutory and regulatory requirements placed on local authority landlords, where the tenant's voice is heard and acted upon. Changing legislation, tenant satisfaction, best practice and findings from self-assessments have supported the drafting of the attached document within the framework of the Corporate Plan.
 9. Our tenants and leaseholders are "paying customers" buying a housing product, or buying housing services, with income and expenditure ring-fenced in the HRA.
 10. It is worth noting however that council landlord services have always had distinct characteristics compared with other major council functions. Fundamentally, the landlord service should be considered as a long-term capital business. Day to day income and spending must be managed alongside maintaining the asset base, on which both good tenant experience and financial viability of the Council's HRA in the future depend, with its existing commitments and budgets summarised at **Appendix 2**.

Consultation undertaken

11. The draft Housing Landlord Strategy was presented to EMT on the 27 May 2025 where it was recommended that the draft document was split into a strategy document and context statement. The draft strategy document is now presented at Appendix 1 and the context document is presented at **Appendix 3**.
12. Informal consultation on draft Housing Landlord Strategy priorities and policies has taken place over the last 12 months with staff, partners, and the tenant involvement group (TIG). The latter providing statements of intent and the "tenant voice" as a group captured as a foreword to the document.

13. All informal consultation responses have supported the proposal to produce a Housing Landlord Strategy, the content of which has been an evolving and iterative process. The challenge has been timing as the Housing Department is driving hard the process of change through its structures, policy revisions such as the associated Tenancy Policy (2017).
14. A Tenancy Policy is a more legally based and technical document. The revision of ours is running on a different timeline, and it will sit alongside and be linked to the Housing Landlord Strategy once approved through the relevant governance arrangements and the draft is due for presentation at EMT on 12 August 2025.
15. Finding solutions to identified service gaps, ramping-up house building and improving our existing stock, whilst implementing new methods of “amplifying” the tenants voice in our Landlord functions are all current workstreams.
16. Public consultation is proposed over the next two months and this report as presented to the Panel for consideration and amendment is part of the adoption process.

Financial and resource implications

17. Any expenditure required by the proposed action plan contained within the draft Housing Landlord Strategy will be met from existing budgets within the HRA and have already been factored-in the 30 Year Business Plan.
18. New policies and systems of work required in the shorter-term at a service level to improve service delivery and outcomes are part of the regular financial monitoring arrangements to manage risk.

Legal implications

19. The Regulator of Social Housing launched its current regulatory framework on 1 April 2024, and the “new” regulations for social housing providers are contained within its Consumer Standards. These relate to Compliance, Health and Safety, Property Condition, Neighbourhood and Communities, with a specific focus on Tenant Engagement and Influence, supported by the introduction of statutory reporting requirements of standard Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) as covered in a separate report to this Panel.
20. The draft Housing Landlord Strategy and associated context statement summarise an array of existing housing policies and

procedures that have a legal basis and require appropriate legal remedies. For example, our ASB and Domestic Violence policies as recently published.

Risk assessment

21. Failure to raise standards, meet the regulatory requirements of the consumer standards and respond appropriately to complaints could lead to fines and compensation levied by the Regulator, Housing Ombudsman or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
22. The successful delivery of the consumer standards mitigates longer term legal and financial risk to the Council. Our self-assessment and activities already undertaken to prepare for inspection mitigate against the possibility of the Council not achieving a compliant grade from the regulator and the consequences of financial and reputational, damage, including prosecution for breaches of health and safety rules.
23. Assurance can be given that NFDC currently provides a good overall service to its tenants as evidenced by the TSMs and the risk profile is acceptable and professionally managed.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

24. Whilst the report has no direct implications, the work of NFDC will include improving the energy efficiency of our local housing stock, providing better services on our estates, including open spaces, and the positive contribution to neighbourhoods. This may present further opportunities to contribute to the Council's neighbourhood and climate objectives.

Equalities implications

25. A formal Equalities Impact Assessment is being undertaken and this will be presented to Cabinet for consideration and strategy amendment before formal adoption following public consultation. This will take account of both positive and negative impacts identified with our tenants and stakeholders. The focus will remain on our customer services approach, and how we can adapt landlord services to meet individual household needs.
26. Overall, the Consumer Standards, particularly the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard is likely to have a positive impact on NFDC tenants as there is a requirement for landlords to "understand the diverse needs" of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional

support needs' and assess whether all tenants have fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services.

Crime and disorder implications

27. The interventions proposed through our improvement to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour as part of the consumer standards is likely to lead to an initial increase in the number of cases prosecuted in the courts, or by the Police, whilst long term interventions proposed should lead to a long-term reduction in crime and disorder.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

28. The collection, retention and deletion of Tenant data is governed by GDPR and associated guidance. All data will be collected and maintained in line with the required legislation. These Policies are developing but already in place at a service level to improve service delivery and outcomes.
29. Once the Housing Landlord Strategy is fully adopted the linked policies will be updated in line with any changes required and will be continuously reviewed.
30. Many of our planned improvements rely on our Transformation Strategy and team delivering the self-serve and tenant portal, including insight data to enable us to get to know our tenants better and tailor services accordingly. This alongside introducing a new IT repairs system (MARS) is a key priority for us and we are ambitious to achieve this objective within the 2025-26 financial year.
31. The successful delivery of these IT programmes will further mitigate legal and financial risk to the Council.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

32. The approach of ensuring the Housing Service is fully compliant with the consumer standards including for housing neighbourhoods as well as homes may involve increased and better partnership working with the National Park Authority where some of the Council's housing stock is also located and managed by our landlord functions.

Conclusion

33. The formal adoption of a Housing Landlord Strategy signals our ambition of becoming an “aspirational landlord” and sets out a road map to achieving operational excellence in meeting the needs and aspirations of our tenants and leaseholders in a transparent, accessible, public facing document.
34. The Council is delivering a good service to its tenants and leaseholders as evidenced by the TSMs over the last two years and has made significant progress toward meeting the requirements of the Social Regulation Act (2023) and the consumer standards.
35. There is a significant programme of work taking place in the landlord service and many system changes are planned to include CRM, policy and practice improvements that are to be implemented over the next twelve months.
36. The Housing Department is confident in its direction of travel and prioritisation of investment to maintain and improve its compliance with the consumer standards and offer a better service to its tenants and leaseholders.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft Housing
Landlord Strategy 2025-2029

Appendix 2 – HRA Business Plan
Investment Summary

Appendix 3 – Draft Housing
Landlord Context Statement

Background Papers:

[Regulator of Social Housing
Consumer Standards](#)