

# Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel 17<sup>th</sup> September 2025

## Social Housing Regulation Act (2023) Progress Report Number 4 (Neighbourhood and Community Standard)

Purpose	<p>To provide Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel with an overview of the Council’s progress of the Housing Department’s landlord function in meeting the requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Act (SHRA 2023).</p> <p>The Act and its associated consumer standards came into force for all stock-owning registered landlords including councils in April 2024.</p> <p>This report focuses on the Council’s progress against the Neighbourhood and Community Standard and identified gaps in provision. It is one of the four consumer standards landlords must deliver to meet the regulatory requirements set by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)</p> <p>The <i>Neighbourhood and Community Standard</i> as stated by the RSH:</p> <p><i>"Outcomes landlords must deliver about engaging with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes."</i></p> <p>Our approach and preparation for improving outcomes for our tenants and preparing for future Inspection by the RSH against this standard is presented in this report.</p>
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report provides an update on the Council’s progress in meeting the Neighbourhood and Community Standard under the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023. It is the fourth in a series of five reports assessing our compliance with the new housing consumer standards introduced in April 2024.</p>

	<p>The report outlines the results of a detailed self-assessment and gap analysis, which found that the Council is broadly compliant with the Neighbourhood and Community Standard. Most gaps identified are either already being addressed or are considered medium priority.</p> <p>Key areas of focus and outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety of Shared Spaces – No significant gaps identified, ongoing improvements in collaboration with partners being made.</li> <li>• Local Cooperation – A medium-priority gap identified; action underway to tailor services to local needs.</li> <li>• Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Incidents – Two original high-priority gaps were identified; mostly addressed through policy updates, team restructuring, and improved reporting mechanisms.</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse – One remaining gap identified around staff training and awareness; plans are in place to address this.</li> </ul> <p>The Council is also preparing for future regulatory inspection and has procured a mock inspection by competent housing specialists who will follow the same format as the RSH and offer assurance on compliance grading for NFDC. This is planned for November 2025.</p> <p>Implementation of our existing improvement plans will continue before and after the mock inspection.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p>	<p><b>1. That the Housing &amp; Communities Overview &amp; Scrutiny Panel consider the Housing Department’s compliance against meeting the Neighbourhood and Community Standard as part of the preparedness for Inspection and make any further recommendations to</b></p>

	<b>the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness.</b>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	This report supports the Council’s Corporate Plan 2024–28, particularly in delivering on priorities related to resident wellbeing, housing needs, and community safety. It also outlines the financial, legal, and operational implications of achieving full compliance with the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.
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. A comprehensive background to the implementation of the Social Housing Regulation Act (SHRA 2023) was given in the January report to this Panel. It was agreed that each of the four consumer standards would then be looked at in turn against our gap analysis at subsequent meetings, in the order where we considered there was the most work to be done.
2. Progress against the Transparency, Influence and Accountability (TIA) standard was considered in March and the Tenancy Standard in June. This is the third report looking specifically at a consumer standard in turn. The focus this time is on the Neighbourhood and Community Standard. This report aims to give an accurate picture of our current state of compliance with the standard and the improvement plans in place. This is to ensure Members receive assurance that the service understands the gaps and has a clear plan to implement the required actions and changes to become fully compliant with each standard.
3. We are waiting to receive confirmation as to when the Regulator plans to inspect NFDC and continue to prepare evidence of compliance against all the four consumer standards, whilst continuing to deliver high quality and improving landlord services to our tenants and communities.

## **Neighbourhood and Community Standard**

4. A gap analysis (more details below under 'Preparedness for Regulatory Compliance') against the Regulator's Consumer Standards, which demonstrates a high-level of compliance with the Neighbourhood and Community Standard. In short, gaps that are either in progress of being closed or assessed as a medium priority with on-going plans in place.
5. As outlined in previous reports, each Consumer Standard is broken down into specific expectations. The following four are within the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.
  - Safety of shared spaces
  - Local Cooperation
  - Anti-Social Behaviour and hate incidents.
  - Domestic Abuse
6. This report examines these specific expectations and measures our performance against the outcomes through the self-assessment and gap analysis process. The self-assessment process has further areas, 'Taking the Lead' and 'Neighbourhood Management.'

These are not part of the consumer standards and relates to the Housing Quality Network's (HQN) professional knowledge base, which questions how aware of the areas within this standard the governing body are.

## **Preparedness for Regulatory Compliance**

7. The Council continues to take proactive steps to prepare for the new regulatory regime, as outlined in the previous reports to this Panel. Part of the process remains the completion of a self-assessment against the consumer standards, resulting action plans and regularly updating the gap analysis tracker.
8. A full explanation of the methodology of the self-assessment process was provided in the March report to Panel. It is worth noting that our self-assessment includes the specific expectations of the consumer standards as well as areas from the Code of Practice and HQNs professional knowledge, effectively going beyond compliance and striving for excellence in service delivery.

## Chart 1: Current Gaps across all standards

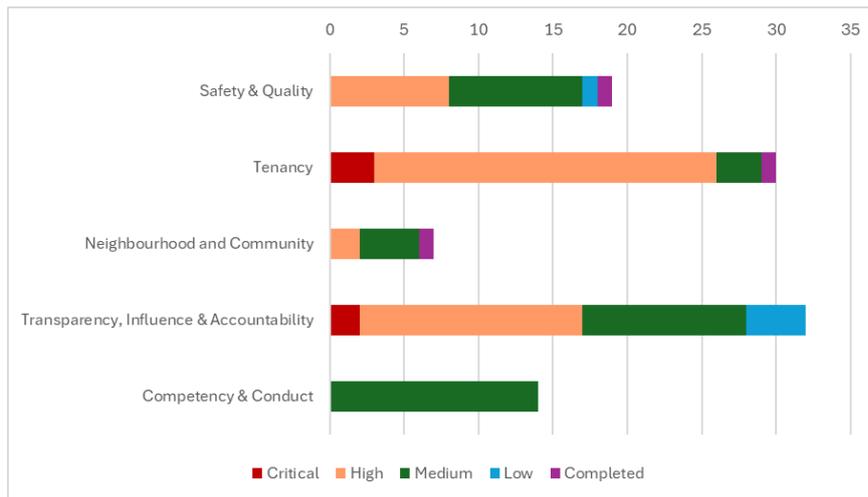
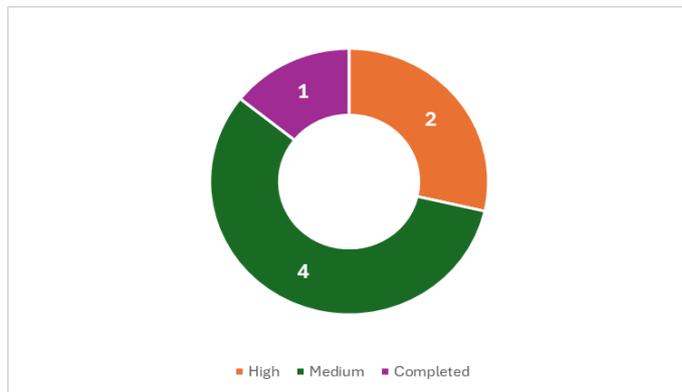


Chart 2 below demonstrates the priority rating for the seven identified gaps within the Neighbourhood and Community standard.

## Chart 2: Priority Ratings.



## Safety of Shared Spaces

9. *'Registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of shared spaces.'*
10. There are two items within this specific expectation and there were no identified gaps. The self-assessment identified the actions in place that ensure our compliance.
11. Evidence of working co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps ensuring the safety of shared spaces, includes things such as working with the Tenant Involvement Group to publish information on fire safety and working across the Council, for example with the Place Operations and Sustainability directorate to ensure gritting is completed up to blocks.

12. While assessed as compliant there were some areas of improvement identified. One of these is the need to improve collaboration with other Registered Providers and Landlords where appropriate.
13. The second item looks at working cooperatively with partners to, for example, remove hazardous fly-tipping. As a local authority landlord, we can use internal service level agreements for example, with the street scene team. Issues such as defective street lighting would be referred to Hampshire County Council.
14. In addition, part of the preparation for inspection currently being undertaken is the recent procurement of an external organisation to complete a 'mock inspection.' This will provide both an external audit of our current position against regulatory compliance and an accurate idea of our readiness for inspection.

### **Local Cooperation**

15. *'Registered providers must co-operate with relevant partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they provide social housing.'*
16. Housing Landlord Services has a close working relationship with other Council functions which aids cooperation to promote social, environmental, and economic wellbeing in the areas we provide social housing. This includes the attendance at groups such as the corporate cost of living steering group and attendance at the local children's partnership which brings together local organisations to discuss the wellbeing of children and families.
17. Landlord services also identify and communicate the role played in promoting social, economic wellbeing to our tenants. There are several examples of how this is completed. The key method of communication is the twice-yearly publication and distribution of the Hometalk magazine. A hard copy is delivered to every tenant and includes articles on social and economic wellbeing as well as practical tenancy management.
18. Like the previous standards reported to this panel, it is important to remember the assessment standards are the same for local authority landlords and housing associations. Therefore, some of the wording seems confusing for local authorities. Within local cooperation evidence is required to demonstrate cooperation with the strategic function of the local authority in achieving their objectives. As the authority that delivers the strategic housing function this involves

collaboration with the landlord functions of the housing department and with partner agencies in providing broader services for vulnerable tenants.

19. A gap was assessed under how we tailor our role promoting social, environmental, and economic wellbeing in an area based on our strategic objectives, the views of our tenants and our presence in the area. This was assessed as being of a medium priority due to actions being in place to mitigate the gap. These include increasing neighbourhood walkabouts between the tenant engagement, ASB and Neighbourhoods teams and planning community days.
20. They were driven by feedback from the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, levels of reported Anti-Social Behaviour, identified environmental issues and areas of deprivation. A due date was set for the end of September 2025 to review this gap due to the stated actions taking place over the summer months.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Incidents**

21. *'Registered providers must work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police, and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and hate incidents in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.'*
22. The ASB strategy and accompanying ASB Policy, Hate Crime Policy & Good Neighbourhood Management Policy were presented to Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in January 2025. The ASB strategy was recommended for formal consultation, and the other three policies were agreed and recommended to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness.
23. Alongside these policies, restructuring of the tenancy management functions to two separate teams (one focusing on Tenancy Sustainment and the other focusing on ASB and consisting of specialist ASB Neighbourhood Housing Officers) has meant the team's ability to respond to ASB and incidents of hate crime has improved and their knowledge and experience in dealing with these cases is enhanced. When external support is required, a referral will be made to the Victim Support Service or mediation support through NFS Mediation. Local knowledge is also key in ensuring appropriate referrals to resources available such as youth clubs.
24. Tenants are currently able to report ASB and hate incidents via the Housing Hub phonenumber, via an online form, or directly to the neighbourhood team. It is expected that the introduction of the new

Netcall Digital Solution will offer a form of self-service which will also assist in reporting and keeping tenants updated with cases of ASB.

25. There were two assessed gaps within this specific expectation. Both of which were identified as being a high priority, and both are already in progress.
26. The first of these items is well underway. The ASB and hate crime policies are now published on the website and an article on the ASB strategy consultation was published in the summer 2025 Hometalk magazine. The policies and strategy include the approach to investigating reports of ASB and hate incidents and the support available to affected tenants and actions to deal with perpetrators. It is anticipated this gap will be completed with the ratification of the strategy.
27. The second identified gap is around considering the diverse needs of tenants in assessing how they report ASB and hate incidents and how we are working to eliminate any barriers to reporting. As mentioned above (para. 22), the introduction of a tenant self-serve portal will eventually give more flexibility with ways of reporting. Another reason for identifying the gap was the lack of accurate tenant data around diverse needs. Following completion of the first phase of a tenant data collection project a second phase is happening. This is a new and on-going service wide approach to acquiring and keeping up to date up household data for all our tenancies.
28. The aim is to improve the reliable data available and as awareness of tenant vulnerabilities increases a more targeted approach to our landlord service offer will aim to remove barriers, and bespoke landlord services to specific households and neighbourhoods as appropriate.

## **Domestic Abuse**

29. *'Registered providers must work co-operatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice.'*
30. The items of the Consumer Standard around Domestic abuse have been assessed as compliant. There is one identified gap that comes from the Code of Practice.
31. The corporate Domestic Abuse strategy with appendix Landlord Domestic Abuse Policy was discussed at the March 2025 Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, with agreement that the draft Strategy be supported for Cabinet approval and formal consultation and the draft Landlord Policy be supported for approval by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness.

32. As the local authority there is a direct working relationship between the Neighbourhood and Tenancy Management teams and the Council's Community Safety team.
33. The identified gap is about raising awareness and understanding among relevant staff of the approach to domestic abuse, so they can recognise signs, particularly those linked to a tenant's housing circumstances. Currently relevant staff receive level 1 and 2 training and there is a plan in place to have Domestic abuse champions within teams who will receive enhanced training. Further awareness or training now the Landlord Domestic Abuse Policy has been ratified has been planned but has not yet taken place.
34. Information is published on the Safer New Forest pages of the website and housing officers will deliver support, advice, and signpost on to appropriate organisations if necessary. Apart from the publication of the Housing policy there is no further information on the housing pages of the website.
35. When assessing ourselves against the consumer standards the possibility of working toward gaining accreditation from DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) was considered. The decision was to concentrate on implementing the policy and strategy across the Council first and review this in 2026/27.
36. The Co-located Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate post officially commenced on 5 June 2025, as set out in the signed Service Level Agreement between New Forest District Council and Stop Domestic Abuse. This marked the start of a two-year funded partnership, placing a specialist advocate within the Council's housing and homelessness services to provide direct support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse, deliver staff training, and strengthen multi-agency collaboration in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the consumer standards. This included the introduction of a 'Flexible Fund' which is a low-barrier fund to help tenants overcome financial barriers to safe housing, such as emergency relocation costs, and essential household items. This fund is accessible without requiring evidence of abuse, making support more equitable and survivor centred.

### **Taking the lead**

37. As previously explained the final two sections are not specific expectations of the consumer standards. They are recommended by HQN as a means of helping landlords meet the Regulator's relevant standards.
38. Since the completion of the gap analysis one of the areas identified here has been completed and is now business as usual. It was identified that the governing body, in the case of local authority this is

the Portfolio Holder, should be receiving information on neighbourhood management, including data about the incidences, severity and treatment of ASB, hate crime and domestic abuse. A dashboard of reported ASB has been developed and an overview of high-level cases is provided to the Portfolio Holder in his monthly briefings.

### **Neighbourhood Management: General**

39. The first area identified as a gap here relates to the tenant data collection project (para. 25) and whether the diversity of the different communities is taken into consideration, ensuring that all tenants have fair and equal access to neighbourhoods and estate management services. Phase 2 of the data collection project will take into consideration how this data will be used to monitor access to services.
40. The integrated communities action plan was published in 2019 and relates to building strong integrated communities where people – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. While the Government action plan is not something that has been followed building integrated communities and challenging segregation are fundamental to the work of the landlord services and the Tenant Engagement team are completing Community Days across the district.

### **Analysis of Inspection Judgements – Neighbourhood and Community Standard.**

41. It is important to bear in mind when reading inspection judgements, they are very much a snapshot of the process and conversations between the RSH and the landlord. We can however gain valuable insight into some of the reasoning and issues faced by landlords within this area of regulation.
42. To date, there have been seven landlord judgements that mention failings within the Neighbourhood and Community Standard. Four of the judgements are from C2 inspected landlords. The Regulator's description of what a C2 means there are some weaknesses in delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvements are needed.
43. Of these four judgements one judgement mentions weaknesses in all four standards, two mention weaknesses in the Neighbourhood and Community standard alongside the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard. One also mentions the Tenancy Standard, and one judgement has the weakness in the Neighbourhood and Community standard to 'a lesser extent' than Safety and Quality and Transparency, Influence and Accountability.

44. The observation is that these three standards, aside from the Safety and Quality standard, are very interlinked where weaknesses in one will translate into weaknesses across the others. The reasoning the RSH has given for these weaknesses include lack of performance oversight, out of date ASB policies or not yet formally ratified, no evidence of meeting service standards in relation to ASB, poor approach to case management, lack of ability to identify trends, and lack of robust mechanisms for regular performance scrutiny.
45. Three are from C3 inspected landlords where there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed. Of these, two state the Neighbourhood and Community standard requires improvement but weaknesses are to a lesser extent than other standards. The third has failings in the Safety and Quality, Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standards as well as the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.
46. It should be noted that all seven landlords who have identified regulatory weaknesses or failings under the Neighbourhood and Community Standard have to date been local authority landlords.
47. NFDC's self-assessment and Gap Analysis process as highlighted in this report gives a good picture of the current position against the standards, however, it is of use and interest to look at these judgements in comparison to where we think NFDC is currently positioned which is mostly compliant as outlined in this report.

### **Corporate plan priorities**

48. Priority 2: Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives. The Corporate Plan 2024-28 states that delivery of this priority will be supported by the delivery of a new Anti-Social behaviour strategy.
49. Priority 3: Meeting Housing Needs – particularly in relation to the number of council homes achieving Energy Performance Certification Band C and percentage scores for the five safety and compliance management Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

### **Consultation undertaken.**

50. Consultation with tenants, Members, senior management as well with colleagues across the housing sector has been a strong focus of the preparation process.

51. Tenant consultation is factored into any service development at the point of project planning and strategy development including our new Landlord Strategy which is currently going through the process of adoption.

### **Financial and resource implications**

52. Any expenditure required by the proposed action plan will be met from existing budgets within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and have already been factored in the draft 30-year business plan. New policies and systems of work required in the shorter term at a service level are ongoing to improve service delivery and outcomes.
53. Once the service plan is fully adopted the policies will be updated in line with any changes required and the budget will be continuously reviewed.
54. 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 Housing Ombudsman or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

### **Legal implications**

55. The Regulator of Social Housing launched its new regulatory framework on the 1 April 2024 which outlines our requirements as a social housing provider including compliance with its four consumer standards.

### **Risk assessment**

56. This report gives assurance 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. It is nonetheless considered prudent to add gaps in consumer standards to the corporate risk register due to the unknown timescales for inspection to maintain corporate oversight on this business-critical issue, but also what this means for the satisfaction services deliver to our tenants.

### **Environmental / Climate and nature implications**

57. 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 in the longer term.

## **Equalities implications**

58. The Consumer Standards are likely to have a positive impact on NFDC tenants as there is a requirement under the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard 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.
59. There is a logical read across to the Neighbourhood and Community Standard where improved data collection regarding households and communities will allow us to meet the individual needs of our tenants more effectively.

## **Crime and disorder implications**

60. It is anticipated there will be potential indirect and direct positive impacts on the Council's tenants and neighbourhoods. 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 in our communities, neighbourhoods and estates.

## **Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications**

61. 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. The Policies are required in the shorter-term at a service level to improve service delivery and outcomes. Once the service plan is fully adopted the policies will be updated in line with any changes required and will be continuously reviewed.

## **New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications**

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

## **Conclusion**

63. NFDC is broadly compliant with the Neighbourhood and Community Standard under the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, with most

gaps either already being addressed or assessed as medium priority with action plans on place for full compliance.

64. Proactive preparation for regulatory inspection is underway, including:

- Completion of a detailed self-assessment and gap analysis.
- Procurement of a mock inspection to externally validate readiness.

65. Key strengths include:

- Strong internal collaboration across council departments.
- Clear communication with all tenants (i.e. Hometalk magazine).
- Updated policies and restructuring to improve ASB and hate crime response.

66. Remaining gaps are being actively managed:

- Enhancing tenant and household data collection to better understand diverse needs and plan services effectively.
- Improving staff training on domestic abuse.
- Increasing visibility and accessibility of reporting mechanisms.

67. The Council's approach to delivering its landlord services aligns with its Corporate Plan priorities, particularly around resident wellbeing, housing needs, and community safety.

**Appendices:**

**None.**

**Background Papers:**

[Regulator of Social Housing  
Consumer Standards](#)