

To: Cabinet
Date: 11 December 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: HRA Asset Management Strategy and 5-Year Investment Programmes

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present the Scrutiny recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lizzie Diggins, Chair of the Housing and Homelessness Panel
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Corporate Strategy 2024-28
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 27 November 2024 to review a Cabinet report on HRA Asset Management Strategy and 5-Year Investment Programmes. The report, which is due for consideration on 11 December 2024, recommends that Cabinet adopt the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy plan for 2025-28; approve the HRA Investment Programmes of up to £250m over the next 5 years; approve the commissioning of the sub programmes to Oxford Direct Services Ltd (ODS) through current HRA direct award arrangements; approve the commissioning, clienting and financial management arrangements for effectively implementing the recommendations and enable the development of annual Delivery Plan by ODS for 2025/26; and delegate authority

to the Executive Director for Communities and People, in consultation with the lead member for housing.

2. The Committee was grateful to Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities) for attending to present the report as well as to Peter Matthew (Executive Director – Communities and People), Nerys Parry (Head of Housing Services) and Lourdes DeBarry (Housing and Tenant Consultant) for attending the meeting and answering questions from the Committee.

Summary and recommendations

3. Lourdes DeBarry, Housing and Tenant Consultant introduced the report, highlighting its connection to the HRA 40-Year Business Plan. The strategy included a three-year asset management plan, which establishes the foundation for the Council’s long-term approach to planning, investing, and improving its housing stock, alongside a five-year investment programme outlining the planned delivery of works. Both were informed by tenant surveys and existing asset data.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including those about the setting of tenant satisfaction targets, and how demand-led aspects of the programme would be managed given the unpredictability of future needs. Questions were also raised in regard to the management of the transitional period for implementing the investment programme, and whether mechanisms would be in place to address urgent issues that fall outside expected lifecycles.

The Panel discussed measures considered to manage the unpredictability of demand-led aspects of the programme, noting the importance of data trends and joint working to predict and address future needs, particularly for issues like repairs and adaptations. A proactive approach to managing demands was underscored, and the Panel was reassured that current delegation arrangements allow for flexibility in budget allocations, enabling resources to be effectively redirected to priority areas in response to under or overspending.

5. Another key focus of discussion was the importance of ensuring that tenant satisfaction targets were ambitious enough to drive continuous improvement, particularly in areas such as repairs and placemaking. Acknowledging the necessity to benchmark against national standards for comparability, the Panel was of the view that there are other opportunities to enhance satisfaction levels through increased face-to-face engagement, aligning with the Council’s commitment to delivering better outcomes for its tenants.

Recommendation 1: That Cabinet sets more ambitious targets for tenant satisfaction, aiming to exceed the current benchmark of 70%, by aligning with best practices from top-performing authorities and exploring opportunities for enhanced engagement with tenants.

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