

<b>Committee:</b>	Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board
<b>Report Title</b>	Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan Update
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	8 January 2026
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<b>Lead Officer</b>	Executive Director, Place Alan Lunt
<b>Wards Affected</b> <b>All</b>	All Wards
<b>Appendices (if any)</b>	1. HITP Actions Exemption Report December 2025

## 1. Executive Summary

1.1 The appended Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan (HITP) Exception Report December 2025 provides an update to the Board on the progress against the Plan

## 2. Recommendation

1.2 That the Board considers and comments upon the Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan Exception Report for December 2025.

## 3. Background and Context

3.1 During October 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) issued a 'C3' Regulatory Judgement (RJ) to the council indicating that there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed. Specifically, 4 areas were of concern to the Regulator.

- Asbestos management surveys or re-inspections had been carried out on only around 2% of relevant buildings.

- Although electrical safety inspections had been completed for 96% of its homes, the council is unable to monitor or report on the completion of remedial actions arising from those inspections.
- The council reported more than 14,000 overdue repairs, with over 90% of these yet to be assigned for completion.
- The Safety and Quality Standard requires the council to have an accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes that reliably informs their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for our tenants. The council reported that while it intended to carry out a comprehensive (100%) stock condition evaluation of its housing stock, only 5% of surveys were at the time completed.

3.2 Since then, the council's housing service has engaged in regular meetings with the RSH to discuss any emerging/ additional issues, progress towards compliance with the Regulatory Standard and to provide clarity on the governance arrangements employed within the council to ensure there is robust and comprehensive oversight of the journey towards compliance. Part of the process is the presentation of a progress update to this Scrutiny Board on a quarterly basis.

3.3 Key achievements since the last update to SNAC include

- Tenants Annual Report and Housing Complaints Annual Report published
- Tenant Engagement Roadshows across 6 Towns (25 Jul – 22 Sept)
- Tenant Conference delivered
- Damp and Mould Policy approved at Cabinet
- Frankham Consultancy Group fully engaged as Further Assurance Partner
- Asbestos compliance achieved 100% consistently

3.4 To provide validation on the actions in the plan, the councils Internal Audit Team have undertaken three audits during the current municipal year to provide validation on the actions in the plan. Further audits are scheduled in early 2026 for asbestos and repairs.

- Electrical Safety Inspection audit received limited assurance (recommendations incorporated into HITP).
- Fire safety front entrance doors audit received reasonable assurance.
- Stock Condition Survey audit received reasonable assurance.

## **Repairs Backlog**

3.5 The contract that the council commissioned to carry out the repairs backlog was awarded to Seddon and it commenced on 6th October 2025, with an initial mobilisation and training period taking approximately three weeks. Operational delivery effectively began week commencing 27th October. Based on the first five weeks of activity, a straight-line projection would indicate completion of all works by February 2027. However, progress has

been impacted by the need for extensive surveying due to poor data quality on the original repairs reports.

- 3.6 Over the five-week period, 491 jobs have been surveyed and fully scheduled, ready for tenant appointments. A significant proportion of these are large scale kitchen and bathroom replacements. Initially, Seddon allocated substantial resources to these larger works jobs. Following discussions the programme is now being split into two workstreams during December: Programmed (Capital) and Responsive Repairs. Multiple responsive jobs that can be completed quickly have been identified, which should improve throughput significantly over the next 2–3 months and support achievement of the original 12–13-month contract timeframe.
- 3.7 Seddon are now aligned with the council's expectations and have gained a clearer understanding of the job types and requirements following the initial settling-in period. As a result, we anticipate a substantial increase in completions, and cleansed volumes by February 2026.
- 3.8 Since October 2025 there has been a 30% reduction of backlog jobs. Overall, this represents a 50% reduction from the 14,000 backlog reported in October 2024.

### **Resource Capacity**

- 3.9 Recruitment is ongoing within the repairs service with successful recruitment to nine Senior Craft Employee positions and six multi-trades. Internal promotions have meant that there is still a requirement to recruit permanently to vacancies. The implementation of Awaab's Law in October 2025 has resulted in a need to realign the structure and reset the requirements for business as usual. This will require additional capacity to be built into the team.
- 3.10 Additional recruitment is being prepared for
  - 25 x trades (multi skill and multi trade)
  - 1 x Senior Repairs Officer
  - 3 x Repairs Officers (inspections/supervision)
- 3.11 Details on the progress of the new Housing IT Systems is as follows.

### **Compliance Management System**

- 3.12 Sandwell Council previously managed housing compliance information in several ways, outside of a dedicated compliance management software system. The RSH highlighted this as a major area of concern and a commitment was made to procure and implement a suitable software system to manage compliance. The procured compliance system, C365Cloud, has been populated with clean data and configured to manage the performance of the six major safety factors (Gas, Electric, Fire, Asbestos, Water and Lifts). A transition period, where dual reporting is maintained across all six factors, will ensure accuracy of the data held in C365Cloud and suitable processes are in place to manage the data.

- 3.13 Integration between the C365Cloud system and Sandwell's other housing data systems ensures that live data is shared across systems, enabling a live and reportable position on compliance and any related remedial actions.
- 3.14 Alongside the management of the main six compliance factors initially implemented, further enhancements to C365Cloud are planned. Some of these have started to be implemented and will maximise the future benefits and effectiveness of the system. The enhancement programme includes 100+ activities which contribute towards the council's building safety compliance and the safety of its tenants.

### **Integrated Housing Management System**

- 3.15 The more significant software requirement is for a replacement IHMS to replace the current outdated system that the council utilises. The technical specification for this IT solution has been developed in collaboration with key stakeholders and external Housing IT specialists. The approach taken is to move away from on-premise systems to cloud-based, in alignment with the council's IT Strategy. In addition, there is also an emphasis on procuring as few systems as possible, but as many as is required to meet operational needs and statutory obligations. The technical specification is split into four lots, detailed as follows.

#### **Lot 1 – Asset Management**

- 3.16 There is currently no asset management system in place for Housing, with limited value achieved from utilisation of data within spreadsheets and other documents. The RSH has highlighted the inability of the council to effectively plan investment in its housing portfolio because of not using an effective Asset Management System.

#### **Lot 2 – Housing Management**

- 3.17 The council currently uses Capita's Open Housing software system as its housing management solution. Open Housing is at 'end of life' (classified as a legacy product) with only limited support available. The most recent support and maintenance contract expired at end March 2025, with an extended support agreement agreed beyond that date to cover the implementation period of a new Housing Management System.

#### **Lot 3 – Lettings and Homelessness**

- 3.18 The council currently uses MRI's Jigsaw to manage homelessness cases. Jigsaw does not have any specific functionality for managing advice and prevention and there is no integration with Open Housing, resulting in re-keying of data across the two systems.

#### **Lot 4 – Property Services**

- 3.19 The council currently uses Advanced's Job Manager and Dynamic Resource Scheduler to manage most of its housing maintenance job activities. There is good integration between these systems and Sandwell's digital presence,

enabling tenants to log and self-appoint a repair. There is no integration with Open Housing, to keep it updated with job history etc, which is important for all housing staff to be able to see the complete picture from a tenancy / property perspective. There is also no integration with Sandwell's Housing Data Warehouse. The current contract with Advanced is due for renewal in early 2026.

### **Procurement Route for Software Systems**

- 3.20 The re-evaluation of the procurement route, by Procurement and Legal colleagues, has concluded. Procurement delays, and commencement of the new Procurement Act 2023 legislation at end of February 2025, has resulted in a delay in the commencement of procurement activity.
- 3.21 The Competitive Flexible Procedure (CFP) of Procurement Act 2023 has now commenced; Procurement Pipeline Notice published 23 May 2025, and statutory Preliminary Market Engagement Notice published 3 June 2025. Procurement activity has been impacted by introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 with additional steps included in the procedure.
- 3.22 A Preliminary Market Engagement and Information session was held with potential suppliers at end July 2025 to gather high-level capability and cost information ahead of going out for procurement of Integrated Housing Management System software.
- 3.23 The Project Team has completed all governance required and preparations are in place for the scheduled commencement of the procurement process. This is currently scheduled for publishing week commencing 5 January 2026. Contract Award is now expected by end August 2026.

### **4. Consultation / Governance**

- 4.1 Monthly updates on the progress of the HITP have been provided to Senior Leadership Team and to the Leader and Cabinet Members.
- 4.2 Updates have been provided on a quarterly basis to the councils Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group.

### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 Most of the improvements are being delivered within the agreed budgetary envelope of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) by realignment of resources and changes in working practices.
- 5.2 The Integrated Housing Management System has a capital budget identified which was ratified through Cabinet in December 2025.

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

- 6.1 The RSH intervenes where there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards regulatory framework and significant improvement is needed. The council also must comply with the statutory and regulatory frameworks established for social landlords.

## 7. Risks

7.1 A risk register specifically relating to the obligations to achieve the requirements of the regulatory framework for social housing has been developed and is monitored quarterly.

7.2 The HITP is prioritising corrective actions to the areas of highest risk, specifically those contained in the RSH C3 judgement. There are three phases to the plan:

- Phase 1 – to address the issues and concerns highlighted in the C3 judgement, and if possible, to achieve reclassification of C2.
- Phase 2 – preparation for full inspection by the RSH, to achieve a C1 classification.
- Phase 3 – in line with the Council's ambition to embed a culture of continuous learning and improvement within housing services to achieve service excellence.

7.3 Significant progress has been made against outcome milestones to measure progress against each of the project phases. Work programmes are broadly on track and are providing the RSH and other stakeholders with assurance of grip and pace of the transformation projects. The overall risk rating of Amber reflects a positive trajectory from the original red rating when the regulatory judgement was issued but is reflective of the substantial volume of work still to be undertaken.

7.4 A balance between speed of implementation and ensuring interventions are sustainable into the future dictates the pace of change, as does the organisational capacity to deliver the change.

## 8. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

8.1 There are no equality implications because of this report.

## 9. Other Relevant Implications

9.1 Achieving the requirements of the relevant regulatory standards will ensure the fitness, safety, and security of the council's homes for use as social housing and in doing so ensure the wellbeing of our tenants.

## 10. Background Documents

None.

## 11. How does this deliver the Outcomes in the Council Plan?

Growing Up in Sandwell	Safe and affordable housing is essential to young people's health and wellbeing and impacts positively on their opportunities and transition into adulthood.
Living in Sandwell	Safe and affordable housing is essential to meet the needs of vulnerable residents, safeguarding them for risk of harm and supports residents to live independently.

Thriving Economy in Sandwell	Investment in our housing assets will contribute positively to the local economy
Healthy in Sandwell	Ensuring our homes are safe and healthy places to live will mitigate risks of harm to our resident's health.
One Council One Team	Collaborative working across all council teams will deliver service efficiencies within housing services, providing opportunities for investment in services and properties.

## 12. Conclusion

12.1 The HITP will ensure we can deliver an excellent Housing Service to residents in Sandwell. This will ensure we can provide good quality, safe and affordable homes with access to good quality services that support residents to live independently in thriving communities.