

SHDC Housing Landlord Strategy

2024-2026



Introduction

This Strategy sets out the Council's vision for Council-owned social housing within the district of South Holland.

Expectations on Registered Providers are changing, with a focus on property condition, tenant experience and accountability. Registered Providers face the challenge of ensuring they get the basics right whilst contributing to the wellbeing of tenants and communities. Balanced with an increase in oversight and scrutiny from the media, the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing.

With over 3,700 properties, South Holland District Council is the largest landlord in South Holland providing lettings, tenancy and estate management, repairs, programmed maintenance and rent collection directly for its tenants. Homelessness duties are outside the scope of this Strategy.

In setting our Strategy, we have analysed the defining issues shaping the operating environment and the trends that the Council anticipates will influence our sector now and in the future.

A Housing Transformation Team has been established to ensure the Strategy is delivered. The document is to be read in conjunction with the Housing Transformation and Improvement Programme Mandate and the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Sub-Regional Strategy 2024/25-2028/29.

National context

The social housing sector is currently facing several key external drivers that will influence this Strategy over its delivery period. Over the past 2 years, there has been widespread consultation and debate but, in many areas, the detail is still being determined.

The Strategy and supporting action plan must remain agile to account for pending clarifications around key policy issues. The Strategy and action plan will be revised to reflect any financial and operation impacts arising from any material changes to the assumptions made at the time of drafting this Strategy.

- **Social Housing Regulation Act 2023**
New consumer regulation ensuring that landlords listen to their tenants, communicate effectively, have good quality information about the condition of the homes they are responsible for and provide responsive and accessible landlord services. The Regulator of Social Housing sets the standards registered providers must meet so tenants live in safe, quality homes, have choice and protection, and can hold landlords to account, known collectively as the Consumer Standards (2023). Registered providers will be subject to reactive and proactive inspections to ensure that the Consumer Standards are met from April 2024.
- **Fire Safety Act 2021**
Additional fire safety measures to ensure tenants are safe in their homes
- **Building Safety Act 2022**
New legislation to make sure all tenants are safe in their homes and landlords have a responsibility to advise and report on compliance.
- **Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code**
The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code sets out good practice that will allow landlords to respond to complaints raised by their residents quickly and to use the data and

learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and residents.

- **Social Housing Decent Homes Standard Review**
A review of the standards for condition of social homes - consultation pending.
- **Future Homes Standard 2025**
Ensuring new built homes from 2025 produce less emissions.
- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**
Transforming the response to domestic abuse, helping to prevent offending, protect victims and ensure they have the support they need
- **Care Act 2014**
Ensuring that housing has a role to play in safeguarding adults.
- **Levelling up White paper**
The government's vision for spreading opportunity more equally across the UK, announcing the establishment of an Older People's Housing Taskforce to better understand the housing market for our ageing population.
- **People at the Heart of Care, Adult Social Care Reform White Paper**
Sets out the Government proposals for reform of Adult Social Care, highlighting prevention and positioned digital connectivity as vital to better care. The government's key policy priority is to support people to remain at home, rather than in care homes or hospital settings, for as long as possible.

Whilst there is legislation, regulation and prescribed practice in place, the Council still has freedom to determine how it delivers services. This Strategy sets out how the Council will deliver its Housing Landlord Service "the service".

Strategic vision

The overall strategic vision for the Council is directed by the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Sub-Regional Strategy 2024/25-2028/29.

A bold and ambitious partnership of Councils, working together:

- To shape policy at sub-regional level
- To secure more resources to deliver on our priorities
- To do more for the communities we serve
- To have a greater impact in tackling the wider common challenges our communities face
- To become more efficient in the way we operate

South Holland District Council aims 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. We will determine our vision, as a landlord, with our tenants as part of one of our first tenant engagement pieces.

Our Tenants

In 2023, the Council carried out a tenant census. Tenants were invited to complete the census by post, online and by telephone. 70% of tenants took part in this piece of work allowing us to understand more about current occupancy and vulnerabilities, as well as the level of interest and involvement tenants had in the service provided.

The key findings are as follows:



The 'typical' tenant is a woman in her mid sixties living on her own in the Council's general needs housing



51% of tenants state that their day to day activities are limited by a long term physical or mental health condition or illness, with 40% of households experiencing permanent mobility issues



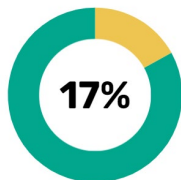
A third of general needs tenants have children living with them



54% of general needs tenants are underoccupying their home



66% of tenants would like to be more informed about our service



17% of tenants would like to be involved in improving and shaping our service

Tenant satisfaction

Tenant satisfaction is one of the many ways to measure the performance of the service.

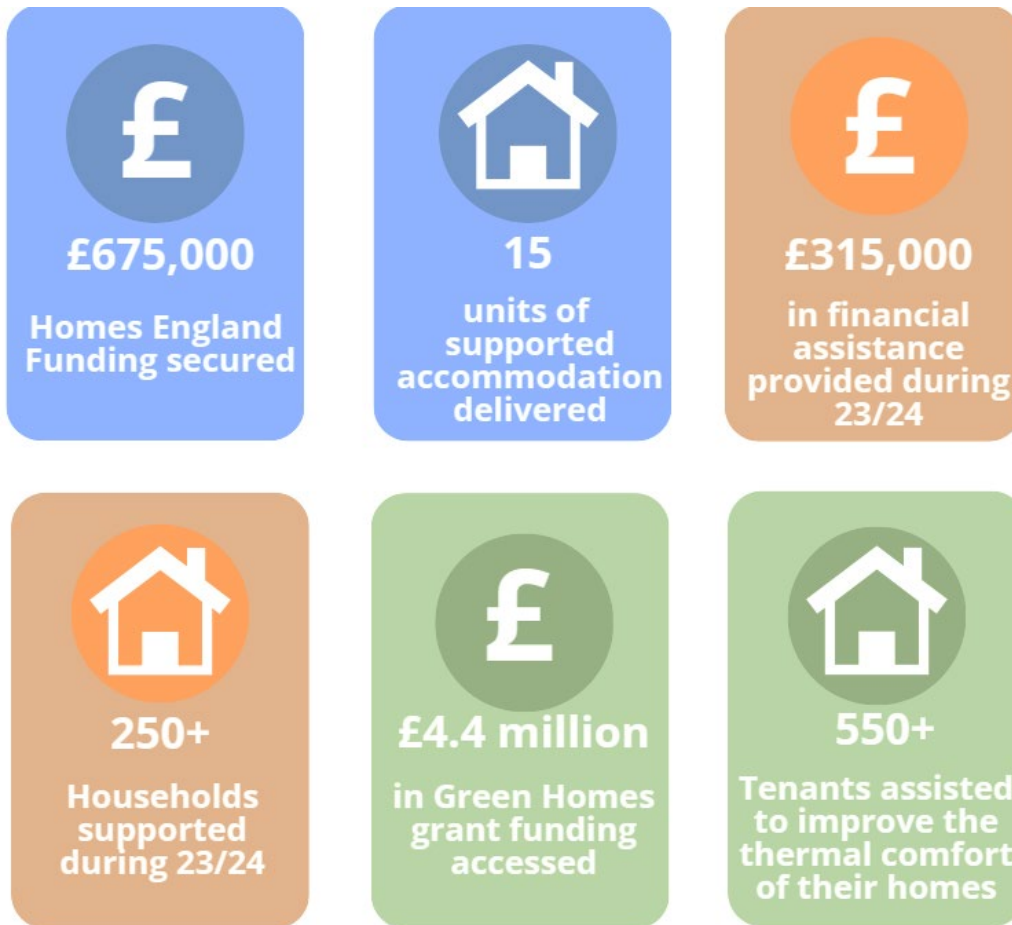
From 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing requires all registered providers to collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in managing their homes and neighbourhoods. There are 22 tenant satisfaction measures, covering five themes:

- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Effective handling of complaints
- Responsible neighbourhood management.

This data must be submitted to the Regulator and published. Live data on tenant satisfaction will be made available on our website at www.sholland.gov.uk/GetInvolved-Feedback and will be shared with our tenants and Members annually.

Supporting our tenants

The Council prides itself in supporting its tenants.



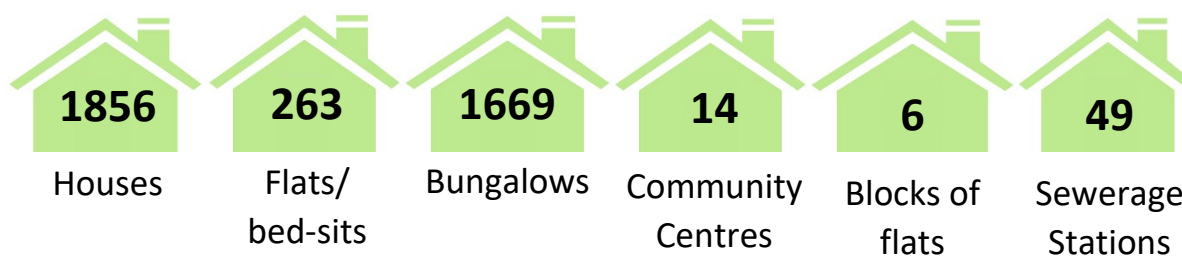
- For many years, the Council has partnered with the Citizens Advice, offering a dedicated money and debt advice service to its tenants focussed on sustaining tenancies.
- Following extensive consultation with our tenants, we have recently completed a review of the Sheltered Housing service offer. Alongside digital improvements designed by tenants, service improvements will be recommended based on tenant feedback.
- Capitalising on our Investment Partner status with Homes England, we have secured £675,000 in funding and delivered 15 units of supported accommodation. This compliments our traditional tenancy offer for those who may otherwise struggle to access accommodation.
- Our established Tenant Hardship Fund continues to support tenants suffering extreme financial hardship. In response to the Cost-of-Living crisis, we assisted tenants during 2023/24 with financial assistance in excess of £315,000. We also established a Cost-of-Living Support team, concentrated on brokering support from partner agencies, having assisted over 250 households to date with a variety of issues such as improving finances, downsizing and accessing employment.
- We have secured £4.4 million in Green Homes grant funding to date, assisting over 550 tenants with improving the thermal comfort of their homes, in turn reducing their energy costs.

Our properties

South Holland District Council manages a portfolio of over 3,800 homes across the district consisting of bed-sits, flats (all below 11m tall), bungalows and houses let as general needs and sheltered housing, plus shared owners and leaseholders. 1025 units are let as sheltered housing to residents aged 55 and over and/or residents that would benefit from a wellbeing alarm system connected to a telecare service available 24/7.

Included in the portfolio are community centres scattered across the district within our Sheltered Housing schemes, as well as sewerage treatment works where our residents are not able to access mains sewers. In 2022/2023, we invested £5 million in our properties and have committed to spend £7.5 million during 23/24 (including £2.8 million Green Home grant funding to improve the energy efficiency of our homes). In 2023, we purchased 54 new properties.

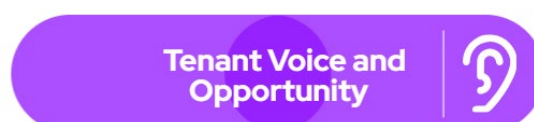
The portfolio is ringfenced via the Housing Revenue Account. All money received from tenants and leaseholders for rent and service charges pays for housing management services, reactive repairs, planned maintenance, estates, and asset management. The Strategy provides the overarching direction for how the resources and assets held within the HRA are used.



Please note these figures fluctuate based on Right to Buy sales and new properties being purchased.

Our ambitions

This Strategy covers areas of service delivery related to landlord functions and how the Council shapes, engages, and improves services for tenants. The Strategy follows four themes:



Culture and Operational Excellence

We will deliver a service that meets the needs and aspirations of our tenants, whilst keeping them safe. To accomplish this, we will:

- Embed a professional and positive culture where we respect and listen to tenants and do the right thing, including proactively putting things right when they go wrong. The corporate culture will include partnership working, inclusivity and task ownership
- Appropriately resource the service, retaining and recruiting talent
- Ensure that the service has a strong voice across the Council and South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership
- Make sure our colleagues have the tools, insight, knowledge and flexibility to provide a positive customer experience including intelligence into how people are living, targeting support for those in greatest need
- Equip our colleagues with the information, professionalism, skills and capacity to embed change

Accountability and Transparency

We will be well governed and financially resilient, operating efficiently and responsibly, and investing wisely to fulfil our social purpose. To be successful, we will:

- Critically examine our decision making, satisfaction and performance with our tenants and our partners through the lens of their expectations
- Measure, monitor, report and publish our performance, anticipating issues before they occur
- Embed compliance and assurance at the heart of our Service through good governance arrangements
- Balance the priorities of excellence in outcomes for tenants whilst seeking efficiency and delivering value for money
- Benchmark ourselves against organisations inside and outside of the Housing sector
- Use data to make the right decisions to drive the best outcomes for our homes and our customers

Quality Homes and Connected Neighbourhoods

We will deliver well maintained, safe, affordable homes and neighbourhoods, where people are proud to live that supports their health and wellbeing. To achieve this, we will:

- Continue to take our regulatory, statutory and legislative responsibilities extremely seriously by carrying out programmed safety checks, visits, and regular inspections

- Continue to actively seek external funding and invest in our homes to improve energy efficiency, thermal comfort and seek to reduce the running costs of our homes
- Be confident in the data we hold about our assets to help us make informed proposals on where tenant's money should be spent including making strategic decisions about disposing of assets that are impacting on the standard of service we can deliver
- Continue to work with our tenants to inform us how to improve and get the best out of our Repairs Service
- Invest in the delivery of new homes across a variety of tenures to increase choice and support successful mixed communities
- Work with our partners to provide reliable, consistent services, and tailored intensive support to those tenants who need us the most.

Tenant Voice and Opportunity

Tenants will be at the heart of everything we do and every decision we make. In order to ensure tenants are involved and informed, we will:

- Transform our approach to tenant engagement, ensuring that tenants have opportunities to engage with us in ways that suit them, where they can influence and shape our current and future services
- Ensure tenants are well positioned in our governance structure, inviting them to scrutinise services with us
- Ensure tenants have a high level of satisfaction, where we listen to their concerns and put things right where we need to
- Give tenants a choice in when and how they use our services, ensuring they can access high-quality services quickly, easily and in a way which suits them
- Prioritise service improvements where it will make the biggest difference to our tenants

Measuring success

The Council will measure the success of our Strategy using a series of key performance indicators.

- National Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Tenant satisfaction surveys
- Repair response times and satisfaction
- Quality, time and satisfaction of void properties
- EPC rating of our homes
- ASB data and insight
- Regulator of Social Housing inspection
- New policies adopted
- Complaints data and insight
- Employee satisfaction surveys
- Call and email response times to tenants

Monitoring

The Council is committed to being open and transparent about our performance, and accountable to all our stakeholders, ensuring there is clarity about the accountability and structures framework.

The work of teams, and the results of performance, will be scrutinised and regulated collaboratively by the following:

- Council boards and committees
 - In addition to committees such as Policy Development Panel and Performance Monitoring Panel, we will establish a Housing Programme Board to monitor the satisfaction, performance, and progress of the strategy
 - Oversight for the delivery of the Strategy will lie with the Portfolio Holder – Communities and Operational Housing, Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate and Assistant Director - Housing. They will make sure the service fulfils the primary requirements of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and all other legislation
 - Compliance and performance will be reported as follows:
 - Monthly to the Portfolio Holder – Communities and Operational Housing
 - Quarterly to Senior Leadership Team
 - Six monthly progress report will be provided to Executive Members
- Our tenants
 - Scrutiny and involvement forums – to be established
 - Progress updates and performance information (including satisfaction) will be shared regularly with our tenants including in our annual report and on our website
- Regulator of Social Housing and regulatory standards
 - Annual and quarterly reporting on key performance metrics, stock volumes and implementation of the regulatory standards
 - Assessment / inspections regime
- Housing Ombudsman Service
 - Self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code
 - Reporting complaint data and demonstrating learning from complaints
- Building safety regulation
 - Health & safety legislation and regulatory compliance
 - Responding to the emerging Building Safety Regulator within the Health and Safety sector
- Benchmarking against the sector.

To ensure the Strategy reflects the changing landscape in the social housing sector, the Strategy will be reviewed on a regular basis and changes will be made in agreement with the Portfolio Holder – Communities and Operational Housing. Cabinet will receive an updated version of the Strategy on an annual basis. We will ensure that all new and emerging legislation is met by the service (as set out in the national context at the beginning of this document).