

Public Report
Improving Places Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 01 September 2026

Report Title

Introducing Housing Improvement and Governance

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Spicer, Executive Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report introduces the Housing Improvement and Governance Team, a team which was created in February 2025 in response to the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, 2023.

A brief explanation of the role of the Housing Regulatory Assurance Board is given, and the associated terms of reference attached.

Finally, the report offers an update on the agreed changes to Tenant Scrutiny reporting arrangements to Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC).

Recommendations

That Improving Places Select Commission:

1. Note the content of the report and presentation.
2. Agrees the proposed changes to reporting arrangements for Tenancy Scrutiny reports.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Housing Improvement and Governance team structure
Appendix 2 Housing Regulatory Assurance Board, Terms of Reference
Appendix 3 Changes to reporting Tenant Scrutiny Panel findings

Background Papers

There are no background papers to this report

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No.

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Introducing Housing Improvement and Governance

1. Background

- 1.1 In response to the fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017, and the death of Awaab Ishak from prolonged exposure to damp and mould in December 2020, the Government introduced the [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#).
- 1.2 The Act introduced a robust performance framework to which all social housing landlords in the UK must adhere. The Act gives the Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH) and the Housing Ombudsman greater powers to oversee and drive-up standards, making social housing homes safer, and giving tenants the opportunity to influence policy and services. Regulation includes:
 - In person inspections (including an online review and a request to submit material evidence of delivering against expectations), at least once every four years, to gauge performance against the expectations stated in six [consumer standards](#)
 - Safety and Quality
 - Transparency, Influence and Accountability
 - Neighbourhood and Community
 - Tenancy
 - Rent
 - Competence and Conduct (to be introduced in October 2026)
 - The annual submission, and publication, of [Tenant Satisfaction Measures](#).

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Council created the Housing Improvement and Governance (HIG) Team in February 2025, in response to the new regulatory environment introduced through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
- 2.2 Four services sit within Housing Improvement and Governance:
 - a) Governance and Involvement Team;
 - b) Business Development Team;
 - c) Programme Management Team; and
 - d) Housing Transformation Programme.

The Team structure can be found in **Appendix 1**.

2.3 Governance and Involvement Team

- 2.4 Governance and Involvement comprise:
 - housing governance, in terms of aligning with and offering assurance against the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards, and
 - tenant engagement.
- 2.5 The focus of the Governance team is ensuring Housing services are well-governed, legally compliant, and able to demonstrate compliance with

regulatory requirements. This is done through identifying areas to strengthen, coordinating actions plans, the monitoring of key documents such as policies and strategies, collating evidence of activity, reviewing publicly accessible information and data, and providing assurance to senior officers and members. The latter is main achieved through servicing the monthly Housing Regulatory Assurance Board.

2.6 The Housing Regulatory Assurance Board is chaired by the Council's Chief Executive, the deputy chair is the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health. The meeting is attended by senior officers across Finance and Legal, as well as the Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence, the Executive Director (of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health), Service Director for Housing and Housing Heads of Service.

2.7 The terms of reference of the Housing Regulatory Assurance Board have been attached as **Appendix 2**.

2.8 **The Tenant Engagement Team (sits within the Governance and Involvement Team)**

2.9 Tenant engagement at Rotherham Council is a shared responsibility across all of housing services. It is a key requirement of the "Transparency, Influence and Accountability" Consumer Standard.

2.10 As well as supporting teams within the Housing Service to engage effectively with tenants, the Tenant Engagement Team manages the contract with RotherFed, the third sector organisation which successfully tendered to deliver some elements of tenant engagement. The Council offers [a range of opportunities](#) for tenants to influence the shape of housing services.

2.11 The Tenant Engagement Team:

- provides a wide range of opportunities for tenants to get involved, helping them influence decisions about their homes and shape council housing services
- supports tenants to scrutinise council housing services and work with housing teams to respond to their recommendations, driving service improvements where needed
- supports a pool of over 200 tenants in the Connectors Pool, who can engage with Housing Services flexibly, and on the topics which interest them the most.
- works with the Housing and Estates and Neighbourhoods Team to deliver community engagement activities.

2.12 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel, which carries out scrutiny investigations and makes recommendations for improvements, is one example of the opportunities. Other examples are:

- Housing Involvement Panel - a regular forum where tenants discuss housing services direction, provide feedback, and challenge performance.

- Screen Team – an online group that works with us to improve tenant communications.
- Learning from Complaints Panel – a forum where tenants work with officers to ensure the Council learns from complaints and use the learning to improve services.

2.13 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel has recently conducted a review of its own process. **Appendix 3** outlines the recent changes made to the way in which Tenant Scrutiny will report to IPSC.

2.14 Tenant engagement activity is guided by the recently launched [Tenant Engagement Framework](#) 2026 - 2030. The framework has been co-designed with tenants and leaseholders and focuses on making sure tenants' and residents' voices continue to influence decisions about the homes in which they live, services and neighbourhoods. The framework sets out how the Council will work with tenants and leaseholders over the next four years, the outcomes we aim to achieve, and how progress will be measured and demonstrated. Delivery is supported by an action plan that translates these ambitions into practical actions.

2.15 In July 2026, we were pleased to receive confirmation that Rotherham Council had achieved [Tpas Exemplar accreditation](#). This nationally recognised accreditation is awarded to organisations that demonstrate the highest standards of tenant engagement and a strong commitment to involving tenants in shaping services.

2.16 The Programme Management Team

2.17 The Programme Management Team acts as the link between Housing, Services, and external suppliers, ensuring that digital solutions support service delivery, regulatory compliance, and positive outcomes for tenants and residents. The team leads the implementation, development, and continuous improvement of Housing systems, working closely with service areas to understand operational requirements and translate them into effective digital solutions.

2.18 Workstream Leads manage projects from initial scoping through to implementation and benefits realisation. This includes solution design, system configuration, testing, training, and ongoing support, enabling them to become subject matter experts for the systems they deliver. The team also leads service improvement initiatives, supporting Housing colleagues to maximise the value of technology and ensure systems remain aligned to changing business needs.

2.19 The team has successfully delivered several significant projects and system builds, enabling housing services to operate more efficiently, make better use of data, improve tenant experiences and provide robust evidence of compliance with Consumer Standards.

2.20 Current priorities include:

- preparing Housing Services for Awaab's Law Phase 2;

- implementing the Anti-Social Behaviour and Customer Relationship Management modules;
- enhancing Housing Online to better record customers' diverse needs;
- improving customer access through automated SMS repair confirmations; and
- developing a more consistent approach to service-specific customer satisfaction surveys.

These projects are focused on improving customer outcomes, increasing efficiency, and ensuring Housing systems continue to meet the evolving needs of both residents and colleagues.

2.21 Business Development Team

- 2.22 The Business Development Team has formed part of the Housing Improvement and Governance Service since February 2025. The creation of this service has sharpened the strategic focus on delivering improvement projects that drive compliance with the Consumer Standards, enhance the customer experience, and streamline housing service processes.
- 2.23 Working collaboratively with the Governance and Involvement Team, the team ensures that tenant voice is embedded throughout project design and delivery. The team also partners closely with the Programme Management Team to implement the system changes required to support new ways of working and deliver sustainable service improvements.
- 2.24 In addition, the team is responsible for the management and delivery of the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey, as well as the production of the associated bi-annual Cabinet reports. The team plays a key role in analysing data and translating customer feedback into targeted service improvements that enhance performance and tenant satisfaction.
- 2.25 Within the team there is a dedicated Project Lead role, working alongside the Housing Repairs Service. The role currently leads the options appraisal for the future delivery model of the repairs and maintenance service, working with specialist consultants to evaluate service delivery, identify improvements and develop a sustainable operating model. Through effective project and change management, stakeholder engagement and performance oversight, the post ensures service improvements are aligned with regulatory requirements, consumer standards and the Council's ambition to deliver a compliant, efficient and value-for-money housing service.

2.26 Housing Transformation Programme

- 2.27 The Housing Transformation Programme is a two-year initiative designed to fundamentally reshape the Housing Service, with the ambition of becoming a best-in-class landlord and achieving a compliant regulatory grading (C1 or C2) from the Regulator of Social Housing. The programme is being delivered in response to an increasingly robust regulatory landscape, including the introduction of routine inspections by the Regulator of Social Housing every four years.

- 2.28 A series of service reviews identified significant opportunities to improve service design, strengthen collaboration across enabling services, and deliver a smooth customer journey that supports positive outcomes and long-term tenancy sustainability. The programme also seeks to create greater consistency across the service through aligned organisational structures, spans of control, team sizes, and grading arrangements.
- 2.29 Success will be measured through the delivery of a modern, high-performing housing service where:
- employees are equipped with the skills, knowledge and development opportunities needed to thrive;
 - processes are efficient, customer-focused and aligned to strategic priorities; and
 - resources are used effectively to deliver greater value for money.

Ultimately, the programme aims to improve services for customers, increase tenant satisfaction, and provide a coherent, end-to-end customer journey that meets both current and future housing need.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

The report is presented for information.

4. Consultation on proposal

The report is presented for information.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

The report is presented for information.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from the information detailed in the report. The formation of the Housing Improvement and Governance Team was included within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

There are no substantive legal issues arising from the content of this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

There are no human resource implications specific to this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 It is a regulatory expectation that social housing landlords know 'who is behind the door'.

- 9.2 The Housing Business Development Team, with support from the Programme Management Team, have introduced the facility for Housing Service teams and Customer Service teams to collate diverse needs information to better understand tenants' needs and tailor housing services accordingly.
- 9.3 The Tenant Engagement Team monitors the diverse needs and protected characteristics of its engaged tenants. The demographics of involved tenants reflects that of Rotherham's wider population

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 The Housing Improvement and Governance team play a crucial role to ensure Housing Services can demonstrate access to good quality and affordable homes and services for all the borough's diverse communities. The team analyses information collected to demonstrate tenants and prospective tenants are treated with fairness and respect. This is achieved by understanding the diverse needs of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs.

The team also works alongside our Tenant Screen Team and wider service teams to ensure that communication with and information for tenants is clear, accessible, relevant, timely and appropriate to individual and diverse needs of tenants.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

The report is presented for information and does not have any implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

12. Implications for Partners

The report is presented for information only and does not have any implications for any partners.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There are no Risks arising from this report as it is for information only. However, the formation of the Housing Improvement and Governance Team plays a critical role in ensuring the Housing Service remains compliant, effective, tenant-focused and inspection-ready. Without such a team, organisations face a range of strategic, operational and regulatory risks.

Accountable Officer

Sarah Clyde, Service Director for Housing

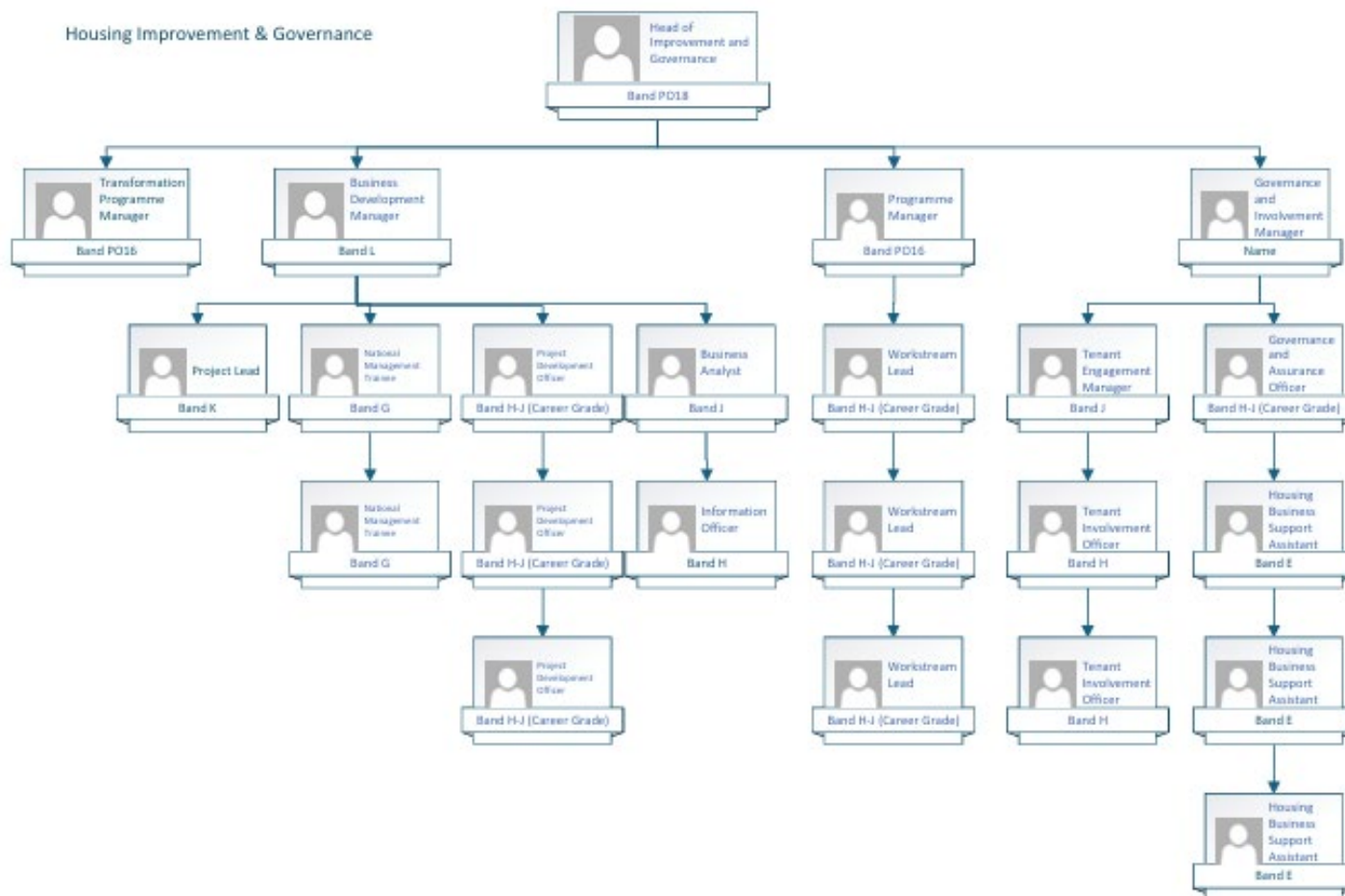
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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

HOUSING IMPROVEMENT AND GOVERNANCE TEAM STRUCTURE



HOUSING REGULATORY ASSURANCE BOARD, TERMS OF REFERENCE**1. Membership**

1.1 Members of the Board will be:

Name	Job title	Role
Cllr Linda Beresford	Cabinet Member for Housing	
John Edwards	Chief Executive	Chair
Ian Spicer	Executive Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	Deputy chair
Sarah Clyde	Service Director of Housing	
Philip Horsfield	Service Director of Legal, Elections and Registration Services	
Rob Mahon	Service Director of Financial Services	
Fiona Boden	Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence	
Paul Walsh	Head of Housing and Estates Services	
Louise Robson	Head of Housing Improvement and Governance	
Lynsey Stephenson	Head of Housing Property Services	
Wendy Foster	Governance and Involvement Manager	Inspection preparation lead
Louise Young	Governance and Assurance Officer	Secretariat
Charlotte Buckingham	Housing Business Support Assistant	Secretariat

- 1.2 Only members of the Board will have the right to attend. However, other individuals can be invited to any meeting as and when appropriate.
- 1.3 Members should nominate a relevant substitute if they are unavailable to attend a meeting.
- 1.4 The composition and terms of reference of the Board will be reviewed by the Board every 12 months or more frequently, if appropriate.
- 1.5 The Board will be chaired by the Chief Executive. If the Chair is not present at any of the meetings of the Board, then the meeting will be chaired by Executive Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.
- 1.6 The Board may look to increase membership over time to include:
- a) Other Council functions in scope of housing regulation (e.g. community protection, asset management, health and safety, neighbourhoods, street scene)
 - b) An external 'critical friend' role

- c) Customer voice.

2. Purpose and scope

- 2.1 The purpose of the Board is to provide the Council with assurance that it is acting in accordance with all relevant social housing landlord regulations. It will achieve this by
- receiving and scrutinising reports and management information relating to compliance of landlord functions with regulations
 - overseeing actions being taken to strengthen assurance that regulations are being met
 - overseeing the Council's relationship with the Regulator of Social Housing including preparation for inspections, self-referrals, submission of data returns and management information.
- 2.2 The main purpose of the Board will be to ensure compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards. Other relevant statutory and regulatory requirements may be considered where the Board considers this necessary.
- 2.3 The focus of the Board is on the Council's housing landlord functions. The following are out of scope: homelessness (apart from where the Council provides its own accommodation under a homelessness duty), private sector housing, housing development and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).
- 2.4 The Board Forward Plan will be based on the following key items:
- Performance and assurance
 - Statutory returns and regulatory engagement
 - Tenant insights and involvement activity
 - Complaint handling
- 2.5 Other areas of focus may be requested by the Board for a deep dive, with key examples including deep dives into the Safety and Quality Standard (health and safety, stock quality) and meeting diverse needs.
- 2.6 The Chair may agree other items to be added to the forward plan by exception, for example issues arising from a self-assessment or audit, or if a Board member wishes to escalate an issue in their area of responsibility.
- 2.7 Board members who present items will ensure this aligns with the specific consumer standard and required outcome to which it relates, always being clear on the purpose of the item.

3. Frequency of meetings and secretariat

- 3.1 The Board shall meet every calendar month for one hour, and for two hours from November 2025.

- 3.2 The secretariat function will be provided by Housing Services' Governance and Improvement Team. Minutes will be taken, and an action log will be maintained.
- 3.3 The Service Director of Housing, in consultation with the Chair, will be responsible for agreeing agendas, meeting papers, minutes and the forward plan.
- 3.3 Meeting papers will be circulated at least five working days before the meetings.
- 3.4 Meetings will take place in person with an option of joining via Teams (hybrid).

CHANGES TO REPORTING TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL FINDINGS

Revised arrangements for tenant scrutiny reports

The Improving Places Select Commission receives reports on Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) investigations and provides challenge and feedback on the Council's response to recommendations arising from those investigations.

In 2025, the Tenant Engagement Team (TET), within the Housing Improvement and Governance Team, undertook a review of the Council's arrangements for responding to recommendations made by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel. The review identified opportunities to strengthen the consistency, transparency and timeliness of the process.

With approval from the Housing Senior Management Team, the TET discussed proposed changes to the reporting arrangements with the Corporate Governance Team. The aim was to ensure that the Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) receives scrutiny reports at a more consistent and appropriate stage in the process, enabling members' comments and feedback to be considered and acted upon effectively.

Historically, reports arising from tenant scrutiny investigations have been presented to IPSC on an ad hoc basis. This has not always allowed the opportunity to programme reports into committee agendas in a timely manner. It has also resulted in the IPSC being asked to provide scrutiny at different stages of the Council's response process, leading to inconsistency in approach.

The TSP now aims to complete two investigations each year and has agreed a timetable for the submission of its reports. This enables reports to be scheduled into the IPSC agenda programme well in advance.

In addition, the TET has reviewed the timescales within which Housing Services is expected to respond to scrutiny investigation recommendations. Housing Services is now expected to produce a response action plan within two months of receiving a scrutiny report and implement the agreed actions within twelve months.

Previously, these timescales were open-ended. Introducing clear timescale parameters provides greater certainty for the TSP regarding how and when recommendations will be addressed. It also enables the IPSC to receive progress reports at an appropriate point to assess whether recommendations have been implemented effectively and within a reasonable timeframe. The table below offers an overview of the timescales.

Scrutiny Investigation Reports Received	Response Action Plan Completed and Shared	Response Actions to be Completed by	IPSC Receive Report
October	December	The following December	The next available IPSC meeting from January onwards

Scrutiny Investigation Reports Received	Response Action Plan Completed and Shared	Response Actions to be Completed by	IPSC Receive Report
April	June	The following June	The next available IPSC meeting from July onwards

The proposed arrangements were discussed in March 2026 with the Head of Democratic Services, the Monitoring Officer, and the Chair of IPSC, all of whom supported the revised approach.

Under the revised arrangements, IPSC will receive two tenant scrutiny reports each year. These reports will be presented following the completion of the Council's response and implementation period and will focus on the outcomes achieved, enabling IPSC members to provide informed scrutiny, challenge and feedback on the effectiveness of the actions taken.