

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: 2 June 2026

Report by: Councillor Mione Goldspink, Executive Member for Communities

Report title: Scrutiny of Registered Providers' Communications Methods

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary –This report makes recommendations to the Executive for consideration following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review of communication methods used by Registered Providers of housing in the district.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:

- a) **Consider and approve the recommendations found in the action plan at appendix A.**
- b) **Agree that the recommendations outlined in the action plan to be taken forward are implemented and Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided with a progress report on implementation.**

1.0 Background

1.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed on the 16 September 2025 to establish a task and finish group to review the methods of communication used by Registered Providers (housing associations) to engage with their tenants, elected members and council officers. This area of scrutiny was driven by a wish to identify actions that could result in tangible improvements to residents.

1.2 Task & Finish Group meetings were held on 29 October 2025, 17 November 2025, 4 December 2025 and 6 January 2026.

- 1.3 There was varied engagement from registered providers, with some engaging fully in the process, others providing information to inform the recommendations made and some organisations not engaging. This highlighted the difficulties with communication experienced by some residents and members, which prompted this scrutiny exercise.
- 1.4 The Task & Finish Group were impressed with the information that was shared through the process by those who engaged. The Task & Finish Group expressed that the process had provided them with a greater understanding of the processes used by Registered Providers, the council and partners to provide services and support residents. Many examples of best practice were shared, and these have been used to inform the recommendations.
- 1.5 Scope for improvements in communication between the council and Citizens Advice Bureau were also identified during this work. This issue was outside of the remit of this review as were not specifically about housing services. Therefore, recommendations in terms of this area have not been included in this report but are being taken forward separately.
- 1.6 The Task & Finish Group also discussed how internal communications between council officers and members could be improved. There was discussion about if/when direct contact might be appropriate and the group suggested guidance on this. This was also felt to be outside of the remit of this review but proposed a future review into the effectiveness of member enquiries processes to consider this.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Task & Finish Group identified a range of recommendations which were felt would improve communications between Registered Providers, members and officers of the council.

- 2.2 These recommendations were divided into the key themes of contact information, information and training and on-going communication and engagement.
- 2.3 These recommendations and how these could be implemented have been considered. These have been developed into an action plan with clear officer accountability and timelines. This action plan is shown at appendix A.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 The Task & Finish Group has examined the evidence from a range of participants and developed recommendations in line with this evidence. These recommendations have been considered by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods on consultation with officers and the plan for delivery developed.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 Accept the recommendations- RECOMMENDED for the reasons outlined above.
- 4.2 Not to accept the recommendations- NOT RECOMMENDED as the recommendations are being made to improve communications, which when not effective are a key driver of poor customer experience and dissatisfaction.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 The remit of Overview and Scrutiny is to help review and improve services and functions run by the council and its local partners. A failure to consider ways to improve communications would be detrimental to members and tenants because this could result in reductions in the quality and effectiveness of services and poor customer experience. This can be mitigated by acting on the recommendations included in appendix A.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Community Safety

a) Yes – the purpose of this review is to improve communication and customer experience and therefore would have a positive impact in terms of community safety as would ensure customer concerns are responded to at the earliest opportunity, preventing escalation of issues.

6.2 Data Protection

a) Yes – legislation prohibits disclosure of personal information. Those taking part in this work would be reminded that no personal information should be shared in the process of the review and guidance provided about the depersonalisation of data.

6.3 Equalities

a) Yes – the purpose of this review is to improve communication and therefore would have a positive impact on customer service standards. This is particularly important for groups who find communication more challenging. This review will consider equalities issues in the recommendations made.

6.4 Environmental Sustainability

a) None arising directly from this report.

6.5 Financial

a) None arising directly from this report.

6.6 Health and Safety

a) None arising directly from this report.

6.7 Human Resources

a) None arising directly from this report.

6.8 Human Rights

a) None arising directly from this report.

6.9 Legal

a) None arising directly from this report.

6.10 Specific Wards

a) None arising directly from this report.

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Background Information: None

7.2 Appendices

a) Action Plan for implementation of recommendations

Contact Member

Councillor Mione Goldspink, Executive Member for Communities

Mione.goldspink@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer

Jonathan Geall, Director for Communities

Contact Tel. No. 01992 531594

jonathan.geall@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author

Katherine Gilcreest, Housing Lead

Contact Tel. No. 01279502068

katherine.gilcreest@eastherts.gov.uk