Report to HCC 6th May 2026	Action required – Noting and discussion	Agenda Item #xxx

Title	Scrutiny Review – Lettings and Allocations
Author	Zarina Chowdrey – Customer First Manager
Recommendation	a) Note the content of the report and the work underway by Scrutiny Panel b) Comment on any elements of the report to develop/amend c) Agree, comment and have oversight of action tracker
Purpose	This report provides Housing and Communities Committee with an overview of scrutiny work undertaken with residents on Lettings and Allocation process.
Exec Summary	Following the successful launch of the Resident Engagement Strategy in January 2026, SLH completed its first scrutiny review, engaging residents through their lived experiences and expressions of interest in a service area to identify opportunities for improvement the resident experience.

REPORT

1.	INTRODUCTION
1.1	In Q4, following the launch of the Resident Engagement Strategy in January 2026, the first scrutiny review was undertaken in line with the revised approach to engagement. Lettings and Allocations was identified as a priority area for scrutiny for the following reasons: • Elements of the process, including the affordability assessment, had previously been highlighted through the Income operating model review as having had limited or no resident involvement in their design. • Recent amendments to the process had largely been implemented as incremental additions to existing arrangements, rather than through a comprehensive, holistic review. • The process had not been reviewed for a significant period and was identified by the former Head of Neighbourhoods as an area requiring a review. • There is broader change to the Allocations Policy from W&F, so it was the right time to review ahead of the changes being made to the system in case there are other changes which can be delivered at the same time. • SLH new business strategy places a strong emphasis on tenancy sustainment and enhanced resident support, recognising that the first 6–12 weeks of a tenancy are critical to long-term sustainability.
1.2	The scope of the scrutiny was to review the lettings and allocations process from the point a property offer is made through to the settling-in visit. The review focused on the effectiveness of communications, information requirements (including completion of My New Home and the affordability assessment), and the application of relevant policies and processes. This included property viewings, customer satisfaction surveys, and settling-in visits. A total of 203 residents were invited to participate in the scrutiny review. This included 85 residents engaged through the Resident Engagement Strategy and a further 118 residents identified based on their recent lived experience, having moved into their home within the last 12 months. Thirteen residents (6.4%) expressed an interest in participating, representing a broad mix of tenancy types and lengths, ranging from long-term residents of over 10 years to those who had moved in within the last three months.

	Feedback was also received from a resident who had recently completed a mutual exchange. While this fell outside the scope of the review, their valuable feedback has been captured to inform improvements to how residents are onboarded following mutual exchanges.
2.	**FINDINGS**
2.1	A total of three resident workshops were held as part of the scrutiny, comprising two face-to-face sessions and one online session. The workshops were delivered in collaboration with the Lettings and Void Manager, Income Team Leader, Neighbourhood Manager, and Customer First Manager. Overall, residents were highly complimentary about their interactions with colleagues at various stages of the lettings process. One resident highlighted the support received when completing an online form, noting that the colleague was exceptionally patient and helpful, and provided reassurance and guidance throughout the process. This support was particularly valued by the resident, who lacked confidence using online platforms. Another resident commented positively on their property viewing, explaining that the colleague was very knowledgeable about the home, which they found reassuring and helpful when making their decision.
2.2	The panel recognised and welcomed the resident-centred approach adopted by colleagues, particularly the flexibility to respond to individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis. However, the panel also identified areas where greater consistency is required. Following detailed discussions, a review of documentation, and consideration of good practice, the panel developed a total of 21 recommendations aimed at improving the overall customer experience and ensuring residents are better supported to make informed decisions about moving into a new home.
2.3	The panel put forward a series of detailed recommendations, as set out in the accompanying action plan. Collectively, these recommendations focus on the following key themes: • Strengthening the capture of relevant information at an early stage of the process • Providing timely, localised information to support informed decision-making • Reviewing and enhancing digital channels to improve self-service options • Reviewing existing forms and correspondence to ensure they accurately reflect individual circumstances • Overhauling the affordability assessment approach to ensure meaningful information is captured and proactive support is offered to applicants • Reviewing customer satisfaction questions to obtain more holistic and meaningful feedback from residents • Strengthening early engagement by facilitating connections between residents and Housing Officers within the first few weeks of moving in
2.4	All the recommendations are detailed below which have been agreed with Managers and Director of Culture & Customers and Director of Housing & Insight.

Lettings and Allocations Recommendations

	Theme	Action	Owner	Timescale
1.	My Account	Consider undertake a full review and overhaul of the My Account portal to improve usability and navigation, alternatively. Seek for alternative options such as an App. Residents have reported difficulties using the portal and frequently contact the Customer Service Hub for support.	Customer First Manager	Q3 26/27
2.	My New Form	Review the My New Home form to address layout, grammatical, and spelling errors identified by residents.	Lettings and Void Manager	Q2 26/27
3.	My New Home	Explore options to provide residents with a confirmation receipt or clear end screen messaging outlining next steps and expected timescales.	Lettings and Void Manager	Q2 26/27
4.	Onboard – Resident census	Determine the most effective approach to capturing Resident Census information at the start of a tenancy. Options proposed by residents include embedding the survey within My New Home, issuing requests for information shortly after move in, or capturing information during a settling in visit.	Lettings and Void Manager, Neighbourhood Manager & Customer First Manager	Q2 26/27
5.	Onboarding – Property viewing	Provide tailored locality information at the viewing stage, including access to public transport, local schools, medical centres, and nearby services, to support residents in making informed decisions. Information should be tailored to resident circumstances (e.g. school information for families).	Neighbourhood Manager	Q2 26/27

6.	Onboarding – Property specification	Ensure residents receive clear information about property specific details, including service charges, shared facilities e.g. parking and communal amenities such as bin stores.	Neighbourhood Manager	Q2 26/27
7.	Offer letter	Review and simplify the offer letter to ensure it is concise, written in customer friendly language, and free from wording that could be perceived as overly formal or aggressive.	Lettings and Void Manager	Q2 26/27
8.	Affordability assessment	Explore the introduction of a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating approach. Residents have indicated that the current process feels intrusive and requires extensive financial information. Consider adopting a higher level assessment.	Income Team Leader	Q2 26/27
9.	Affordability assessment	Update the form to include clear information on financial support available through SLH or via external signposting.	Income Team Leader	Q2 26/27
10.	Onboarding – Viewing checklist	Introduce a standardised viewing checklist to ensure a consistent approach across all colleagues at the viewing stage.	Neighbourhood Manager & Lettings and Void Manager	Q2 26/27
11.	Sign-up stage	At signup, clearly share details of any outstanding repairs and agree timescales with the resident.	Neighbourhood Manager & Lettings and Void Manager	Q2 26/27
12.	Future Planned improvements	Consider providing information on any planned improvement works scheduled within the current financial year.	Neighbourhood Manager & Lettings and Void Manager	Q2 26/27
13.	Home user guide	Digitise generic home information and provide access via a QR code. Residents suggested including a fridge magnet displaying the QR code for ease of access.	Lettings and Void Manager	Q3 26/27 Completion of user guide would compliment this.

14.	Home user guide	Exploration into QR code throughout property with links to SLH 'how to information and videos on website.	Lettings and Void Manager	Q2 26/27
15.	Mutual exchange	Apply the same onboarding principles and standards for mutual exchange residents to ensure a consistent experience when moving into an SLH home.	Neighbourhood Manager	Mutual exchange is a difference process. However, some learnings could be embedded into mutual exchange process from this scrutiny in the future.
16.	Employment reference	Review the employment reference letter and remove questions relating to income sustainability, reliability, or conduct, as employers are unlikely to hold this information. Focus on factual information such as salary, employment duration, and employer details.	Lettings and Void Manager	Q2 26/27
17.	Moving into your new home communication	Review and revise correspondence relating to the gifting of white goods to ensure clarity and consistency.	Lettings and Void Manager	Q2 26/27
18.	Customer satisfaction survey	Revise the survey introduction to clearly explain its purpose and encourage participation, emphasising that feedback - positive and negative - helps improve services. Consider replacing 'score' with 'rate' and changing 'excellent' to 'outstanding.'	Customer First Manager	Q2 26/27
19.	Customer satisfaction survey	Review questions relating to financial support once affordability assessment process has been updated.	Customer First Manager	TBC
20.	Customer satisfaction survey	Issue the survey within 2–3 weeks of the resident moving in and no later than 28 days.	Customer First Manager	TBC

21.	Settling-in visit	Use the settling in visit as a holistic touchpoint to check for any issues such as setting up utilities accounts, making sure resident are receiving bills, offer any support including how to management their home, property and encourage completion of the Resident Census and customer satisfaction survey, and identify any early concerns.	Neighbourhood Manager	Q2 26/27