

Full Council – 10 February 2026

Motion on Notice – briefing note for all Members

The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (as amended) requires RPs to notify the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) when they dispose of social housing dwellings. There are comprehensive and complex requirements.

The regulatory framework lays out the regulator's expectations and includes:

- Protecting social housing from risk.
- Adherence to law and compliance governing documents.
- Accountability to tenants and property consultation with tenants when considering a disposal that would mean a change in their landlord or changes that affect a tenants statutory or contractual rights.
- Achieving value for money in how social housing is used.

It is the responsibility of the RP to ensure they are meeting all the regulatory and legal requirements and manage competing interests when planning or considering a disposal.

The RSH can ask the RP for further evidence having received and compared the disposal notification, data submissions and other evidence to ensure compliance with economic and consumer standards.

RPs are not required to provide notification to the RSH if the disposal is to the residential occupier or the shared ownership leaseholder whether the unit is occupied or not.

The RSH may also monitor and publish information about trends in the sector.

The RSH carried out a successful pilot in April 2024 and from 23 June 2025 they require RPs in England to complete a quarterly disposals notification survey (unless the disposal meets the criteria for a priority notification when this would be sooner). For example, when it is a disposal of its last unit.

The RSH data in October 2024 records the number of social housing units in England that failed the decent homes standard. There were 29 units recorded in the Dorset area. This equates to 0.10% in Dorset compared to the Southwest 0.50%.

Data available for key private registered providers in Dorset on the Decent Homes Standard and EPC ratings refers to the RPs' total stock but illustrates they reported less than 1% failed the standard.

All these RPs publish their strategic aims, and they do align with our Housing Strategy vision 'that residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities' and our objectives on need, supply, standard and homeless prevention.

RP commitment and response on the standard of homes is evident including investment and approach.

We would prefer RPs did not dispose of homes in rural areas because it is difficult to replace them, but we recognise that some local stock will be older in these areas and are less viable to improve to the required standards. Locally RPs have continued to work on opportunities with the local rural communities and community land trusts to build more homes in rural areas.

RPs and Dorset Council have established strong partnerships and engage regularly. Whilst RPs are no longer required to notify local authorities of stock they intend to dispose of, locally, we are normally aware in advance and able to consider opportunities to acquire the unit. Mostly, these opportunities are not viable although both parties recognise the importance of balancing housing standards, disposals and place shaping to ensure that the needs of residents are met whilst maintaining the quality of homes provided. A focus in activity should be expected and could include a short-term uplift in disposal rates because of new legislation and pressure to tackle damp and mould problems in the sector and Dorset will not be immune to this. We believe all RPs with stock in the area are building more new homes than the number of homes they dispose of locally and we welcome continued support and investment in the Dorset area and our communities.

Stock transferred to RPs via previous large-scale voluntary transfer agreements included commitments to improve and maintain stock. Investment in the housing stock increased after the transfer. One RP working locally, has older stock from LSVT including homes with pre-cast reinforced concrete that won't meet energy efficiency standards, and some homes are in areas with subsidence problems.

We believe many areas in England are affected and councils are considering the numbers of disposals. Dorset may wish to write to the RSH to share our views and seek support for RPs and local communities who are managing the challenges around this matter.

Notes -

In the first three quarters of 2025/2026 51 homes have been disposed of by RPs.

Dorset Council is in talks to purchase a small number of these, but the discussions are at an early stage.

There are currently 8 community land trusts actively working on developments that are at various stages of the planning process. These include developments onsite in Portland and Dorchester. Sixpenny Handley has just submitted a planning application. In total there have been 12 completed CLT developments.