

APSE Safe Homes and Sustainable Futures: Transforming Local Authority Housing Stock

To: all UK authorities

1 APSE Summer Series: Housing; Safe Homes and Sustainable Futures

This briefing draws out the key policy and practice messages from APSE's Summer Housing Seminar, *Safe Homes and Sustainable Futures: Transforming Local Authority Housing Stock*, held on Wednesday 1 July 2026. APSE's summer series of events are designed to allow APSE member councils the opportunity to consider the changing operating context for councils. This event had a particular focus on housing safety, regulatory assurance, repairs performance, tenant engagement, retrofit, decarbonisation and the role of local authorities in improving standards across the private rented sector.

For local authority housing professionals, the discussion reflected the reality of delivering services in a more demanding regulatory, financial and political environment. Speakers highlighted practical approaches to strengthening governance, improving data and assurance, redesigning services around tenants, making better use of procurement and social value, and building the skills and supply chains needed to deliver warmer, safer and more sustainable homes. A copy of the presentations can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

A common theme throughout the seminar was the need for councils to evidence performance, understand risk and maintain a clear line of sight between strategic leadership, operational delivery and residents lived experience.

2 A Perspective from the Regulator for Social Housing

Claudia Cobban, Assistant Director – Regulatory Engagement at the Regulator for Social

Housing, outlined the inspection themes most relevant to councils, including stock condition, health and safety compliance, repairs, damp and mould, data quality, oversight and assurance. The key message for members and senior officers was that effective governance depends on reliable evidence, a clear understanding of risk and demonstrable progress against improvement plans.

The session also underlined the Regulator's expectation that councils engage constructively and proactively, using regulatory scrutiny as part of a wider approach to strengthening assurance, accountability and service improvement.

3 The Spatial Distribution of Non-Decent Homes – Introducing the Non-Decent Index

Dr Michael Marshall, Research Associate in Quantitative Analysis and GIS at the University of Sheffield, introduced the Non-Decent Index, a free and open tool that can help identify neighbourhoods where private rented homes are more likely to fall below the Decent Homes Standard. While not designed to track progress over time, the index offers councils a useful evidence base for targeting communications, planning proactive inspections, considering place-based interventions such as selective licensing and informing local housing strategies.

4 A Right First Time Repairs Service

Andrea Elliott, Senior Manager – Neighbourhood, Housing and Homelessness at North Ayrshire Council, provided a practical example of a locality-based housing model built around collaboration, customer insight and a focus on getting repairs right first time. The presentation demonstrated how service design, workforce culture and effective operational management can improve the resident experience while supporting more efficient delivery.

5 Transition from UNITAS to Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Repairs and Maintenance Service

Paul Parkinson, Director of Housing Management at Stoke-on-Trent City Council, reflected on the transition from UNITAS to an in-house repairs and maintenance service. The case study highlighted the importance of strong governance, a capable client function, financial clarity, reliable data, appropriate IT systems and meaningful customer feedback when bringing services back under direct council control.

Taken together, the first session showed that improvement in housing services depends on more than compliance. It requires visible leadership, robust information, tenant-focused

delivery and sufficient organisational capacity to turn assurance into better outcomes across both social housing and the private rented sector.

6 Future Funding for Decarbonisation

Selvin Brown, Director for Net Zero Buildings – Domestic at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, outlined the Government's Warm Homes Plan as a long-term programme to support domestic retrofit, reduce fuel poverty and lower household energy bills. The plan includes £15 billion of public funding to retrofit 5 million homes by 2030, with wider regulation and private sector contributions expected to leverage around £38 billion of total investment. Around £8 billion is focused on low-income households through programmes including the Warm Homes Social Housing Fund and the Warm Homes Local Grant.

For councils, the policy direction is clear: funding and delivery are increasingly being shaped through local and devolved models. Demand for the Warm Homes Local Grant is already high, a new Warm Homes loan scheme is expected to provide low-cost finance from September, and support for heat pump deployment continues to expand. Devolution of delivery is also progressing, with combined authorities and mayoral areas playing a growing role in shaping local retrofit programmes.

The presentation reinforced the importance of local authority leadership in skills, procurement and supply chain development. New procurement requirements around SMEs and social value create opportunities to align retrofit investment with local economic priorities. Councils were encouraged to use the RISE programme for practical support, including masterclasses, toolkits and peer learning, to strengthen delivery capability and share good practice.

7 The Real Green Jobs Accelerator Scheme

Simeon Perry, Head of ESG at Efficiency North, focused on the skills and employment pathways required to support retrofit and external wall insulation programmes. The EN:Procure model demonstrated how social value can be embedded in procurement frameworks, connecting councils, contractors, training providers and learners to create real employment opportunities linked to live housing investment.

8 £15m Retrofit Programme for Cleaner, Healthier, Energy Efficient Homes

Steph Salmon, Energy and Retrofit Manager at Cambridge City Council, outlined how a £15 million retrofit programme is supporting fabric improvements, heating upgrades, renewables and ventilation to deliver warmer, healthier and more energy-efficient homes. The approach places emphasis on learning before scaling, using resident engagement, performance monitoring and partnership working to build confidence in what works in practice.

Across the second session, the message for councils was that retrofit is both an asset management and a public policy challenge. Successful delivery depends on long-term funding, good governance, resident trust, workforce development and partnerships that can translate investment into practical benefits for tenants, councils and local economies.

9 APSE Comment

The seminar underlined the scale of the challenge now facing local authority housing services. Councils are expected to improve safety, quality, tenant satisfaction and regulatory assurance while also responding to decarbonisation, financial constraints, workforce pressures and rising resident expectations. For APSE, the central message is that these agendas cannot be treated separately. Housing safety, repairs, stock investment, retrofit, private rented sector enforcement and tenant engagement all rely on the same foundations: good governance, reliable data, skilled staff, accountable leadership and services designed around local need.

APSE believes councils must retain the capacity, capability and confidence to shape housing services in the public interest. The examples shared at the seminar demonstrated the value of council-led delivery models, effective partnership working and peer learning across the sector. They also showed that improvement requires practical tools, robust evidence and delivery models that are rooted in place, accountable to communities and focused on long-term outcomes rather than short-term fixes.

Safe, warm and decent homes are integral to wider public policy objectives, including health and wellbeing, carbon reduction, local employment, community resilience and tackling inequality. Investment in housing stock should therefore be understood not only as an asset management requirement, but as a means of improving places and supporting inclusive local economies.

As housing services continue to operate under increasing regulatory and financial pressure, APSE will continue to support councils by sharing good practice, strengthening sector knowledge through the [APSE Housing, construction and building maintenance network](#), and

making the case for the funding, powers and workforce needed to deliver safe homes and sustainable futures.

Many councils in England will also need to consider the implications of Local Government Reorganisation for housing stock, service continuity, governance and future delivery models. APSE has developed a range of support for councils navigating this process and identifying the opportunities it may present. Further information is available through [APSE's Local Government Reorganisation Hub](#).

For further information, please contact **Vickie Hacking**, APSE Principal Advisor, at vhacking@apse.org.uk

Vickie Hacking
Principal Advisor
APSE

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APSE member authorities have access to a range of resources to support the delivery of council services. This includes regular network meetings, designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, alongside trade union representatives, to discuss service-specific issues, innovation and continuous improvement. Networks provide an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical issues with colleagues from councils across the UK.

Networks are a free service included within your authority's APSE membership and typically conclude with an informal lunch to support peer networking. If you do not currently receive details of APSE network meetings and would like to be added to the contact list for your service area, please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

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Association for Public Service Excellence
3rd floor,
Trafford House,
Chester Road, Manchester M32 0RS.
telephone: 0161 772 1810
fax: 0161 772 1811
web: www.apse.org.uk

