

REPORT TITLE: Stock Condition Survey Strategy

To:

Cabinet 15 July 2025

Lead Member:

Gerri Bird, Cabinet Member for Housing

Report by:

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Wards affected: All

Director Approval: Director James Elms confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to Cabinet for decision.

1.	Recommendations
1.1	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet Member for Housing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the procurement and delivery of stock condition surveys to support long-term strategic asset management, and delegate authority to the Director of City Services to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue tenders and, following evaluation, award contract(s) to suitable contractor(s) • Finalise procurement and contractual arrangements to implement the Phased Delivery Model. • Approve necessary expenditure • Develop governance and reporting arrangements 2. Approve the adoption of the Phased Delivery Model comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 (Year 1): An externally resourced programme to eliminate the current backlog of approximately 3,000 stock condition surveys;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 (Year 2 onwards): A rolling stock condition survey programme operating on a five-year cycle, designed to provide robust assurance that the Council remains compliant with its statutory obligation to survey every home at least once every five years. This programme also ensures continued adherence to the Decent Homes Standard, supporting the Council's commitment to keeping tenants' homes well-maintained, dry, and safe.
2.	<p>Purpose and Reason for the Report</p> <p>This report sets out a strategy to address significant gaps in stock condition data across Cambridge City Council's social housing portfolio. The Council manages over 7,600 homes and is committed to ensuring they are dry, safe and well maintained meeting the needs of tenants. Accurate, up-to-date condition data is essential for effective investment planning, regulatory compliance, and the delivery of high-quality housing services.</p> <p>Under the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) framework in England, the Home Standard requires social landlords to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the Decent Homes Standard • Ensure tenants' homes are safe, warm, and in a reasonable state of repair • Operate a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service • Maintain accurate, up-to-date stock condition data <p>As of 1 April 2024, revised consumer standards introduced through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 have further strengthened the requirement for regular, robust stock condition surveys. Failure to comply may result in a regulatory judgement.</p> <p>To maintain a rolling five-year survey cycle, the Council must complete approximately 1,500 stock condition surveys each year. This is not operationally feasible under the current model due to the time required for survey completion, tenant access (including no-access cases), data entry, quality assurance, and coordination with other services.</p> <p>This highlights the need for a scalable, sustainable delivery model that can consistently provide accurate and timely stock condition data through a five-year rolling programme.</p>

2.1	<p>Option 1: Phased Delivery Model (Preferred)</p> <p>This report sets out a proposal to adopt a Phased Delivery Model that addresses both immediate and long-term needs. It includes a one-year externally resourced programme to eliminate the existing survey backlog, followed by/combined with a rolling 5-year cycle to maintain up to date records. This approach balances urgency with sustainability, ensures compliance with statutory requirements, and improves housing outcomes for tenants.</p> <p>Typical externally resourced delivery rates range from £80 to £170 per completed survey. Based on this model, the total annual cost is estimated at £150,000 to £200,000, with a five-year total projected cost between £800,000 and £1 million. The cost of clearing the current survey backlog is estimated at £300,000 to £500,000. These figures are indicative only and will need to be stress-tested through a full procurement process.</p> <p>A five-year term is recommended, with optional annual extensions up to a maximum of seven years. This approach ensures the Council meets its statutory duties, including surveying every home within five years, and enables data-led asset management and strategic investment. The proposed duration is designed to attract high-quality delivery partners while supporting a phased transition to a fully insourced model. This allows the Council to build internal capacity over time, reduce long-term reliance on external providers, and establish a sustainable, in-house approach to stock condition surveying. It also supports continued compliance with the Decent Homes Standard. The model provides value for money by enabling economies of scale, reducing procurement and mobilisation costs, and avoiding the inefficiencies of short-term contracting.</p> <p>Model: A one-year externally resourced programme to clear the current backlog (circa 3,000 properties), followed by a rolling externally resourced programme (circa 1,500 properties per year).</p> <p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid resolution of data backlog and immediate compliance risks. • Establishes a sustainable, efficient long-term survey cycle. • Balances internal capacity with external delivery expertise, allowing structured procurement with clear performance oversight.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides flexibility to adapt over time while retaining strong governance and control. • Enables improved budget profiling and year-on-year planning, reducing uncertainty in capital programming. • Strengthens financial control by reducing unplanned carry-overs or reallocations due to delays. • Aligns investment with need, improving targeting and reducing the risk of underspending. • Delivers short-term value through backlog clearance and compliance assurance. • Unlocks long-term value through better planning, reduced reactive spend, and a pathway to a cost-effective insourced service. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires clear mobilisation planning and contract management oversight. • Some internal capacity still needed for QA, tenant liaison, and data integration. 				
3.	<p>Alternative options considered</p> <p>In line with good practice and to ensure a proportionate, value-for-money approach, a range of delivery models were considered through an options appraisal process, with each option assessed against clearly defined Critical Success Factors. While all models presented some merits, only the recommended phased delivery approach was found to offer the necessary level of assurance and strategic value. Alternative options provided only limited assurance in relation to the Council's statutory requirement to survey every home within a five-year cycle and fell short in enabling the proactive management necessary to deliver and sustain compliance with the Decent Homes Standard. By contrast, the recommended approach offers a practical, risk-led solution—delivering swift compliance, supporting a sustainable long-term asset management strategy, and aligning with sector best practice.</p> <p>Critical Success Factors</p> <p>To appraise each option against the following criteria:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th>CSF</th><th>Description</th></tr> <tr> <td>Compliance</td><td>Supports delivery of the Decent Homes and Home Standards</td></tr> </table>	CSF	Description	Compliance	Supports delivery of the Decent Homes and Home Standards
CSF	Description				
Compliance	Supports delivery of the Decent Homes and Home Standards				

	Speed	Eliminates current backlog promptly
	Value for Money	Affordable and efficient over 5+ years
	Scalability & Sustainability	Deliverable within resource constraints over time
	Data Quality	High-quality, consistent, and integrated asset data
3.1	<p>Alternative options</p> <p>Option 2: Phased In-House / Externally resourced Delivery</p> <p>Model: Gradual increase in external delivery while maintaining in-house survey programme over 2–3 years.</p> <p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports retention and development of internal expertise. • May delivery greater delivery flexibility during transition period. • If familiarity with stock exists, this may lead to more accurate assessments. • Lower upfront cost compared to full external resourcing in Year 1. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slower pace of backlog reduction prolongs compliance exposure. • Requires robust coordination across internal and external teams. • May result in inconsistent survey methodology or data formats. • Could place sustained pressure on internal capacity and reduce responsiveness to urgent survey needs. • Harder to assure performance and coverage during transition. <p>Option 3: Prioritised Hybrid via insourced and externally resourced supplier</p> <p>Model: High-risk or non-compliant stock surveyed first by external contractor; remaining stock addressed later via internal team or staged procurement.</p> <p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables swift focus on areas of highest concern. • Scalable and adaptable to budget or capacity constraints. • Allows flexibility to pause or reconfigure delivery. <p>Cons:</p>	

- Complex to manage multiple overlapping delivery tracks.
- Data may be fragmented or inconsistent in timing and quality.
- Incomplete portfolio data may hinder robust investment planning.
- Risk of perceived inequity among tenants if some areas experience delays.
- Higher risk of administrative burden in coordinating triaged delivery.
- Historical performance shows that internal mechanisms have not consistently delivered stock condition surveys at the scale or pace required.
- The need for sustained reliable delivery over multiple years makes this option less suitable given previous challenges with capacity and prioritisation.
- A robust and unified delivery system is needed to maintain momentum, ensure compliance, and provide confidence to tenants, members, and regulators.

Option 4: Permanent Externally resourced Model (Rolling Programme Only)

Model: Contractor procured immediately to begin a 5 year rolling survey programme without a dedicated Year 1 backlog clearance.

Pros:

- Contractor builds long-term familiarity with stock and systems.
- Simple model to manage from a contract oversight perspective.
- Reduced internal resourcing requirement.

Cons:

- Existing survey backlog remains unaddressed for several years.
- Delays full compliance and visibility of condition data in the short term.
- Limits early strategic planning and investment decision-making.
- Performance monitoring and KPIs harder to assess early in programme.
- May appear insufficiently responsive to current regulatory expectations.

Option 5: Fully Insourced Delivery Model

Model: All survey work delivered in-house by expanding internal surveying capacity. This model reflects the Council's current delivery approach, which, while aligned with in-house service values, has faced persistent challenges in keeping pace with demand.

These limitations — including capacity constraints, resource pressures, and competing service priorities — have contributed to the existing survey backlog and limited the Council’s ability to maintain a consistent, up-to-date picture of stock condition.

While expanding internal capacity through recruitment is theoretically possible, in practice it presents significant challenges due to market competition for qualified surveyors, long lead times for onboarding and training, and limited flexibility to scale resources in response to short-term pressures or backlog recovery needs.

Based on the delivery requirements of a five-year survey cycle, a fully in-house model would require four full-time surveyors and one full-time administrative support officer to manage data upload, quality assurance, and integration into asset systems. This includes staffing, equipment, travel, training, and quality assurance. While some costs—such as equipment or travel—may reduce slightly over time through efficiencies or reuse, the in-house model remains significantly more expensive than typical externally resourced delivery rates. Externally resourced providers benefit from greater economies of scale, established delivery infrastructure, and the ability to flex resources to meet demand — factors that help drive down per-survey costs and reduce operational risk to the Council.

The total annual cost of delivering a fully in-house stock condition survey programme is estimated at approximately £193 per completed survey, equating to around £293,360 per year. Over a five-year period, the total cost is projected to be £1.46 million.

In addition to the higher cost, this model carries ongoing risks around recruitment, resilience, and delivery performance. These constraints, if continued, would undermine the Council’s ability to meet regulatory expectations under the Consumer Standards and demonstrate timely, effective action to ensure homes are safe, decent, and well maintained. The phased delivery model offers a more scalable, cost-effective, and sustainable solution in both the short and long term.

Pros:

- Full control over delivery, standards, and workforce culture.
- Promotes organisational learning and staff development.
- Strengthens internal resilience and alignment with corporate values.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration with other housing functions (e.g. repairs, voids) possible. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High upfront cost for staffing, training, systems, and tools. • Longer mobilisation period may delay resolution of backlog, prolonging compliance risk. • Recruitment and retention challenges, especially in specialist roles. • Less flexibility to scale up or down with changing needs. • Higher ongoing overheads (e.g. pensions, benefits) compared to outsourcing. • Requires robust internal QA and management systems. • Potential for operational disruption if resources are diverted from core services
4.	Background and key issues
4.1	<p>A significant number of properties in the Council's housing portfolio have outdated or missing stock condition surveys. Around 50% of the housing stock has been surveyed in the past 5 years, the requirement is 100%. 100% of the housing stock has been surveyed externally as part of our external cyclical maintenance programme. We also have 100% modelled data for energy efficiency performance to support actual data from EPCs.</p> <p>While system migration challenges contributed to gaps in the asset register, the more fundamental issue is that stock surveys were not carried regularly over an extended period. Stock condition surveying was not consistently prioritised amid competing operational pressures. Weaknesses in supporting systems, processes, and oversight also contributed to underperformance. As a result, the Council has been unable to achieve the required 5-year survey cycle.</p> <p>In addition, around 270 newly built homes have not been fully integrated into the asset system. Corrective work is ongoing, and all new build properties are forecast to have asset data recorded by July 2025.</p> <p>The Regulator of Social Housing sets out clear expectations through the Consumer Standards. These include the requirement of landlords to ensure homes are safe and in a reasonable state of repair, and that they meet the Decent Homes Standard—free from serious hazards, with modern facilities and adequate thermal comfort.</p>

	<p>Cambridge City Council is committed to maintaining safe, decent, and well-managed homes. To do this, it must have reliable, up-to-date stock condition data. Without it, it is difficult to plan investment, prioritise repairs, or proactively identify issues such as damp, and disrepair.</p> <p>In developing the recommendation alternative delivery options have been considered, including maintaining or expanding in-house provision. However, given capacity limitations and the scale of the backlog, and the need for a long-term robust delivery system Option 1: Phased Delivery Model - A one-year externally resourced programme to clear the current backlog, followed by a rolling programme (circa 1,500 properties per year) is considered the most proportionate, practical, and value-for-money solution.</p>
5.	Corporate plan
5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate plan 2022-27: our priorities for Cambridge - Cambridge City Council <p>Corporate Plan 2022–27: Supporting Key Priorities</p> <p>This decision supports the Council’s Corporate Plan 2022–27 by contributing directly to the following strategic priorities:</p> <p>Leading Cambridge’s response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies and creating a net zero council by 2030</p> <p>By embedding EPC assessments within stock condition surveys and improving the visibility of energy efficiency data, this programme supports carbon reduction efforts and the transition to more sustainable, lower-emission homes.</p> <p>Tackling poverty and inequality and helping people in the greatest need</p> <p>Ensuring that council homes are safe, warm, and in good repair reduces health inequalities and improves living conditions for lower-income households, contributing to better outcomes for those in greatest need.</p> <p>Building a new generation of council and affordable homes and reducing homelessness</p> <p>Robust stock condition data enables long-term asset planning and informed decisions</p>

	<p>on maintenance, retrofitting, redevelopment, and the delivery of new homes—strengthening the Council’s ability to meet housing need and prevent homelessness.</p> <p>Modernising the council to lead a greener city that is fair for all</p> <p>The proposed delivery model strengthens governance, improves the quality and availability of asset data, and supports transparent, evidence-based decision-making. It also enables a staged move toward a fully insourced, cost-effective service that delivers long-term value and resilience.</p> <p>In doing so, this proposal reflects the Council’s values of fairness, accountability, and commitment to continuous improvement.</p>
6.	Consultation, engagement and communication
6.1	<p>Following Cabinet approval, officers will engage with tenant representatives, trade unions, and relevant internal stakeholders to ensure clear communication, transparency, and collaboration throughout the implementation process. This engagement will support shared understanding of the model, address any questions or concerns, and help shape effective delivery arrangements.</p>
7.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
7.1	<p>The Phased Delivery Model is expected to deliver a wide range of operational, regulatory, and tenant benefits. It represents a step change in how the Council manages and plans for its housing stock.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Restore full compliance with housing standards</p> <p>The programme will address current data gaps and ensure the Council meets its obligations under the Regulator of Social Housing’s Home Standard and the Decent Homes Standard, contributing to safer, well-maintained homes for residents.</p> <p>Reduce risk of planning errors and reputational damage</p> <p>Up-to-date, consistent asset data will reduce the risk of incorrect investment decisions, compliance breaches, or miscommunication—thereby protecting the Council’s credibility with residents, regulators, and partners.</p> <p>Support accurate investment planning and housing safety</p> <p>Comprehensive condition surveys will inform strategic maintenance programmes, improve cost forecasting, and allow for more proactive and</p>

	<p>targeted investment in safety-critical works (e.g. damp, mould, ventilation).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve tenant confidence in housing services The visible and structured nature of the programme, combined with improved engagement and follow-through, will help rebuild trust with tenants and demonstrate the Council’s commitment to listening and acting on housing issues. Enable long-term service improvement and efficiency By embedding a rolling programme, the Council will avoid future backlogs and reduce the need for costly reactive interventions. This supports a more efficient, planned and financially sustainable approach to asset management. Support cross-cutting objectives The inclusion of EPC data and damp/mould risk indicators will support climate goals, health and wellbeing priorities, and alignment with future housing quality standards. <p>What will be different as a result of this decision?</p> <p>The Council will move from a reactive, fragmented approach to a proactive, planned model of asset intelligence. Managing our homes will be driven by live, accurate data—enabling smarter decisions, better use of budgets, and, most importantly, helping to ensure that every tenant lives in a decent, safe, and warm home, supported by a consistent service they can trust.</p> <p>What does good look like?</p> <p>A complete, accurate, and regularly updated stock condition database that underpins every housing investment decision. The Council confidently meets its legal and regulatory obligations, including the Decent Homes Standard, with assurance that all properties are safe, warm, and well-maintained. Investment is targeted where it is needed most, reducing reactive repairs and improving value for money. Tenants experience a more proactive, transparent, and consistent housing service—one that listens, responds, and delivers on its promises. High levels of tenant satisfaction, strengthened trust, and improved quality of life are the clearest indicators that the service is delivering what good truly looks like.</p> <p>How will we measure success?</p>
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	<p>Key performance indicators will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of homes surveyed annually and within cycle • Reduction in properties with no recent condition data • Tenant satisfaction with survey process and follow-up • Audit outcomes from quality assurance sampling • Compliance with Consumer Standards and internal asset KPIs
8.	Implications
8.1	Relevant risks
	<p>Contractor underperformance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: Robust performance management through contractually defined KPIs, regular progress reviews, and clear escalation procedures. <p>Tenant no-access or refusal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: Early and proactive tenant communications, flexible appointment scheduling, and coordination with housing officers to support access. <p>Data inconsistencies or quality issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: Regular quality assurance (QA) reporting by the contractor, a 10% audit sampling regime by internal staff, and structured onboarding and training. <p>Transitional issues during mobilisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: A phased mobilisation plan with defined milestones, regular internal coordination meetings, and contractor readiness checks before full rollout. <p>Potential TUPE considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: TUPE implications have been considered as part of due diligence, but are not currently expected to apply. This is due to the nature and scope of the externally resourced work, and the fact that current job descriptions, person specifications, and the roles fulfilled by existing staff do not align with the proposed delivery model.
	Financial Implications

8.2	<p>Costs and Market Benchmarking</p> <p>Full programme costs will be confirmed through the procurement process. However, market benchmarks suggest that proposed pricing is competitive and in line with comparable public sector contracts.</p> <p>Recent UK benchmarking indicates that the cost of a full stock condition survey — including Decent Homes compliance checks and EPC data collection — typically ranges from £80 to £170 per property, depending on provider, survey volume, and access arrangements.</p> <p>Using this model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated annual cost: £150,000 to £200,000 • Five-year projected total: £800,000 to £1 million • Cost to clear existing survey backlog: £300,000 to £500,000 <p>These figures are indicative and will be refined through the procurement process. Pricing from recent local authority contracts confirms the competitiveness of these rates in the current market.</p> <p>Cambridge's approach is designed to ensure value for money, while prioritising quality, compliance, and data integrity.</p>
	Legal Implications
8.3	Contractual arrangements will be structured to ensure compliance with procurement regulations and relevant housing legislation.
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
8.4	An Equality Impact Assessment is attached as an appendix to this report.
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.5	The rating from the Climate Change Rating Tool is Medium Positive.

	Procurement Implications
8.6	<p>A compliant procurement approach will be used to appoint a suitable contractor, ensuring timely mobilisation and value for money.</p> <p>The Council will retain oversight of contractor selection, quality, and performance through contract management mechanisms.</p>
	Community Safety Implications
8.7	<p>Surveys will assess issues that affect household safety, including damp, mould, and ventilation risks.</p> <p>Findings will feed into responsive actions and contribute to improved living conditions across the housing portfolio.</p>
	Human Resources
8.8	<p>While TUPE implications have been considered as part of due diligence, they are not currently expected to apply due to the nature and scope of the externally resourced work. The risk is low but will continue to be monitored with advice from HR and legal services to ensure compliance and preparedness if required.</p>
9.	<p>Background documents</p> <p>Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985</p>
9.1	Stock Condition Survey Strategy – Options Appraisal Dated May 2025
10.	Appendices
10.1	<p>1 – Climate Change Rating Tool</p> <p>2 – Equality Impact Assessment</p> <p>3 – Briefing Note</p>
	<p>To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact: Sean Cleary, Strategic Delivery Manager Tel: 01223 458287</p>

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