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West Northamptonshire Council Proposes In-House Management of Social Housing Amid Performance Concerns

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West Northamptonshire Council is poised to make a significant decision regarding the future of its social housing services. At a cabinet meeting scheduled for Tuesday, councillors will consider bringing the management of over 11,500 social homes in Northampton back under direct council control marking a potential end to the current arrangement with Northamptonshire Partnership Homes (NPH).

Established in 2015 by the former Northampton Borough Council, NPH is an arms-length management organisation (ALMO) responsible for a wide range of services, including property repairs and maintenance, tenancy support, new housing development, and management of the Ecton Lane Park traveller site. However, concerns over performance standards have prompted a comprehensive review of the existing governance model.

Councillor Charlie Hastie, Cabinet Member for Housing, stated:

“This is a significant decision that would allow us to simplify governance, deliver better value for money, and, most importantly, ensure our residents continue to receive a safe, responsive and accountable housing service.”

Performance Failures and Regulatory Action

In 2023, West Northamptonshire Council then under Conservative leadership acknowledged a series of “performance failings” within NPH’s operations. As a result, the council took the unusual step of referring itself to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). A subsequent investigation by the regulator found that several council-managed homes failed to meet national safety and quality standards, raising concerns over compliance and tenant wellbeing.

These findings have accelerated calls for reform and led to the current proposal to bring social housing services back in-house. If approved, this move would allow the council to assume full responsibility for housing management, removing the layer of separation created by the ALMO structure.

Housing Projects Face Viability Challenges

Alongside the governance decision, the cabinet will also consider the future of three major affordable housing schemes that were previously under NPH’s oversight. All three projects have encountered “significant viability challenges,” and the council has already assumed direct control of their delivery to ensure progress continues.

Consultation and Next Steps

Should the cabinet approve the recommendation, the council will launch a comprehensive consultation over the summer to engage tenants and leaseholders. This process will be key to shaping the transition and ensuring that resident feedback informs future service improvements.

The proposal reflects a broader strategic shift aimed at enhancing accountability, service quality, and financial efficiency within the council's housing operations. If implemented successfully, it could serve as a model for other local authorities facing similar challenges with ALMO performance and housing governance.

For residents of Northampton's social housing, the move signals a renewed commitment to safe, high-quality, and tenant-focused housing management.