

Communities and Neighbourhoods Transitional Committee

Meeting held 16 November 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Sioned-Mair Richards (Deputy Chair), Karen McGowan, Joe Otten, Andrew Sangar, Paul Wood and Peter Garbutt (Chair)

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1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

- 1.1 Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards, Deputy Chair of the Committee, notified members that Councillor Peter Garbutt had replaced Councillor Kaltum Rivers as a member of the Committee.
- 1.2 Councillor Richards proposed that a new Chair be elected and nominated Councillor Garbutt for this role. This was seconded by Councillor Sangar. Members voted unanimously in favour of the nomination.
- 1.3 Councillor Richards welcomed Councillor Garbutt as the newly elected Chair.
- 1.4 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee: -
 - (a) appoint Councillor Peter Garbutt as Chair of the Committee; and
 - (b) thank Councillor Rivers for her contributions to the Committee to date.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors' Ben Curran, Alison Teal and Sophie Thornton.

3. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

- 3.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 5.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 October 2021 were approved as a correct record.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

- 6.1 There were no public questions or petitions received from members of the public.

7. PLACE SYSTEMS REVIEW HOUSING PROJECT

- 7.1 Councillor Garbutt introduced Bev Mullooly, Head of Neighbourhood Services, to provide an update on the Place Systems Review.
- 7.2 Bev outlined the Place Systems Review, which aimed to modernise IT systems and the infrastructure and processes around them. This was planned to start in the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service as the current system was old and in need of updating. The current system (OHMS) had been implemented in 1999 and operated with a collection of other systems (Abritas, Apex, Technology Forge, Flare, Confirm etc) and interfaces around it. This was a fully supported service and main data source for the Housing and Neighbourhood Service.
- 7.3 Bev also explained the opportunities for change. A soft market test had been carried out and indicated that a single system would achieve the required strategic enablers. The soft market test demonstrated that the majority of what was needed could be provided in a single modernised system that would gather an up-to-date view of customers and assets. It would allow more efficiency in resolving customer enquiries. It was anticipated that having one system would be more cost-effective and would bring about longer-term efficiencies. It was also expected to allow a smooth integration with Total Repairs and that having less systems would allow better quality of data.
- 7.4 Bev advised that engagement had taken place with Housing and Neighbourhoods service staff to gather all the requirements for the system. Their understanding of customer requirements would help to deliver a better customer service. The team were also engaging with tenants, residents and stakeholders to find out their experiences and ideas on how new ways of working could improve the service. A survey was planned during the next few weeks aiming to assist with this. It was proposed to set up a model office in May 2022, which would engage staff and customers to test, refine, and optimise processes to ensure they work for the service and provide the best experience for customers before rolling out.
- 7.5 Bev confirmed that the budget for the purchase and implementing the new system was £9.3m
- 7.6 Bev outlined the likely benefits to customers and staff that the project would bring. It would be easier for staff to gather, update and use information and thereby improve customer experience. Having a single view of housing customer information would save time on searching multiple systems, and customers would only have to 'tell their story' once.

- 7.7 Customers would also have access to an online portal which would allow customers to access information such as rent balance, property bids and reporting of repairs. This was expected to allow staff to deal with more complex customer enquiries.
- 7.8 The tendering process had begun, and following evaluation, sign-off and testing, implementation of a new system was expected to be between April and September 2023.
- 7.9 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows: -
- The online portal would give customers access to their own information, allowing them to make requests for service and where applicable make changes. Online options available to customers would increase as the system developed.
 - The task ahead was acknowledged as being long and complex. There would be a lot of engagement with staff and customers to ensure that the system was right prior to implementation.
 - Issues relating to housing management would be contained within one system. Other systems would sit separately to this e.g Total Repairs, and the interface would allow for better sharing of information.
 - The Housing contact centre would still be available for customers that preferred to contact the service by telephone. Staff would have access to the new system on their mobile equipment, giving them the ability to answer enquiries in customers' homes.
 - It was noted that such a large and complex IT project came with risks. Data cleansing and migration were crucial when implementing a new housing management system, and appropriately skilled people had been brought in to manage this. The Assistant Director of ICT Service Delivery was the joint project sponsor. His background was IT based with experience of implementing housing management systems for other housing organisations. The project team had a wide range of skills and knowledge ranging from housing, customer experience, data experts, programme and project managers, communication officers and business and data analysts. Experiences from similar projects carried out by other services had also been shared. Conversations had taken place with other local authorities to learn from their experiences of implementing new housing management systems.

- A request was made that, due to the nature and cost of the project, overall leadership of the project should be clear and led by the Executive.
- The importance of procuring a new system that was fit for purpose was noted and designing it with the input of those who would be using the system. It was also noted that the new system must be fit for purpose over the course of its implementation and the subsequent 10 years. Ongoing work with the supplier was planned to ensure this was achieved.
- Reference was made to the process of transferring to a committee system at the same time as moving out of Covid restrictions. The importance of having early sight of decisions to be taken early in 2022 was stressed to ensure options could be considered in a timely way, thereby assisting with the transition process.

7.10 **Resolved:** that the Committee: -

- (a) notes the information now reported, together with the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) thanks Bev Mullooly for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and
- (c) request that a further detailed report from officers be brought back to this Committee in March, and prior to any decision being made to implement the project.

8. ISSUES REFERRED FROM/TO LOCAL AREA COMMITTEES

8.1 Deborah Glen, Policy and Improvement Officer, confirmed that there had been no items received.

8.2 It was noted that Full Council had previously agreed that each Transitional Committee should consider items to be devolved to Local Area Committee's and that full officer support was needed to facilitate this.

9. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

9.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Deborah Glen) on the Schedule of Forthcoming Executive Decisions.

9.2 Deborah requested suggestions for items from the Schedule to build into the future work plan.

9.3 The following comments from Members were noted: -

- It was noted that although the Committee currently had no decision-making powers, other avenues existed to examine decisions taken, such as full Council and Scrutiny Committees.
- A request was made that a report on the Sheffield Street Tree Strategy be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. In response it was noted that a decision had been made and had been published on the Sheffield City Council website.
- The Committee took a vote on whether they should receive the Sheffield Street Strategy report at a future meeting. The majority of the Committee voted against this. Councillor Joe Otten and Andrew Sangar requested that their vote of 'in favour' of the Sheffield Street Strategy report coming to a future meeting of the Committee be recorded in the minutes.
- An alternative option was suggested to bring the independent review of the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry to a future meeting of the Committee.
- A request was made that a report on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and HRA Budget 2022/23 be brought. In response it was advised that the HRA Business Plan was a decision for full Council. It would be completed in draft form within next 2-3 weeks. The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods would report back to members via briefings to each political group.
- It was suggested that a presentation on Youth Services be brought to a future meeting of the Committee so that members were in a position to understand the future of their communities.

9.4 **Resolved:** that the Committee voted against bringing the Sheffield Street Strategy report and instead receive an interim report on the Independent Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry at a future meeting of the Committee.

10. WORK PLAN AND WAYS OF WORKING

10.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Deborah Glen) on proposed ways of working for the Committee and containing a draft Work Plan for the Committee for 2021/ 22.

10.2 The Chair made reference to the comments and suggestions

made at this meeting as to how the Committee should work, and to the proposed topics for consideration, as set out in the report.

10.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee: -

(a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made; and

(b) requests that:

(i) arrangements be made for an informal working group to be set up to specifically to discuss Youth Strategy;

(ii) arrangements be made for an informal working group to be set up specifically to discuss the Housing Repair Service; and

(iii) arrangements be made for an informal working group to be set up specifically to discuss post-Christmas debt.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday 14 December 2021 at 10.00 am in the Town Hall.