

Housing Policy Committee

Meeting held 17 March 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillors Douglas Johnson (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Sue Auckland, Ben Curran, Denise Fox, Sophie Thornton and Minesh Parekh (Substitute Member)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies of absence were received from Cllr Paul Wood and Cllr Fran Belbin.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 No pecuniary interests were declared at the meeting. Cllr Auckland wished that it be noted she acts on behalf of a minor in a rented property.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2023 were approved as a correct record.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 A public question was received from Emily Wilson:

Q1: There is growing concern among residents about under regulated and unregulated HMOs in Broomhill and Sharrow Vale ward pushing the area towards, in the word of one resident, "slum-like conditions." Currently half of the 1900 HMOs in Sheffield are in Broomhill and Sharrow Vale ward.

Issues include mould and damp leading to health issues and large amounts of rubbish and refuse and inadequate parking in areas with high numbers of HMOs. Residents were particular concerned about a recent case where a HMO was approved in an area with an Article 4 directive in place. The property claimed it had been operating as a HMO for 10 years with no sanctions applied which meant that the Article 4 directive in place in the area didn't apply. Some of the residents are sceptical that it actually was operating as a HMO for 10 years. It illustrates the need for tighter regulation in order for existing measures to be effective and the need for a more holistic plan/approach.

Q2: The photo below shows a child's bedding bought new one week ago. This

is from a flat on Exeter Drive where the family are all sleeping in one room because the mould and damp is so severe. The child is up at night with breathing issues the GP has said are related to the mould. Although a particularly awful case, it is only one of many cases of damp and mould in these buildings. On inspection nearly every flat has mould and damp on the outside wall, around the window. Residents believe there is an issue with the building itself that is leading to the issues.

The Chair responded with:

A1: Over the past 5 years the Council's private housing standards responded to just under 2000 complaints across all property types and of these, 8% related to properties in Broom and Sharrowvale wards. We know that is an area where there is a lot of HMO's and that is why there is the article for direction. The council's planning committee approved another house in multiple occupation despite a number of rejections from residents. You are right to show that there is a problem. The green party are doing quite a bit of work to ensure the neighbourhood plan is followed.

Sheffield Council's Private Sector Housing Team regulates the private sector to ensure it offers safe and well-managed accommodation to protect the health, safety and welfare of tenants.

We are responsible for the delivery of mandatory HMO licensing. In order for a HMO to fall within the mandatory licensing scheme they have to be occupied by 5 or more people, forming 2 or more households which share facilities such as kitchen / bathroom. HMOs occupied by less than 5 people are not required to have a licence but must still abide to management and fire safety standards.

Each licenced HMO in Sheffield are inspected to ensure conditions of licencing are being met. Where they do not, we take robust enforcement action. Over £360K of fines in relation to HMO related offences have been issued over the last 5 years sending an important message to non-compliant landlords that they will be punished.

Any tenant that is experiencing property condition and / or management issues, including damp and mould, should contact Private Housing Standards directly on 0114 2734680 or by email at [phs@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:phs@sheffield.gov.uk) and we will investigate this.

A2: The Council have set up the Damp and Mould Task Group to deliver a strategic response to how it will deal with all matters relating to damp and mould. The GP consortia are represented on the Damp and Mould Task Group and it is developing a single portal from which all GP's can raise concerns where patients in council housing have expressed health concerns relating to their property.

For this particular property if we had the address the service would commission a same day inspection to assess the root cause of the damp and mould and to

facilitate appropriate remedial action. Should the tenant need to be temporarily rehoused during this work then this will happen as a priority, in consultation with the tenants.

Also, the council is working on improving its stock condition data across all of its stock, including Exeter Drive. This work will determine what works are required to the fabric of the building to reduce the impacts of damp and mould and will influence the priorities within the 5 Year Capital Programme. In the meantime, the Housing and Neighbourhood Service will communicate with all tenants on Exeter Drive on how to report issues relating to damp and mould.

If Damp and Mould issues are reported through the correct channels then the team should be able to respond pretty quickly and I hope this is reassuring.

5.2 A public question was received from James Martin:

The Access Liaison Group preparations for completing the Local Plan consultation identified a two low a provision percentage for wheelchair adaptable/accessible category 3 housing. Requests have been made for information on existing housing stock that is adapted for wheelchair and severely mobility impaired people where level access is essential. Further to this, it is important that supply of accommodation is spread across the city to ensure people can remain local to their support network of family/friends, again a request for information on known strategic gaps in provision was requested

The lack of any response given an extended time period suggests that in common with several of the papers in front of you today that there is an insufficient grasp of existing provision of wheelchair adapted accommodation across sectors and also no strategic plan to ensure enough provision across the city in line with 20-minute neighbourhood plans.

Can the committee ensure that all relevant departments are motivated to track and report existing wheelchair accessible housing stock and identify the provision in terms of geography spread across the city? In my view it is important that this progresses to completion ready for the new political years housing committees.

Q2: Regarding the homelessness prevention strategy action plan (**Item 9**): It is notable that no tracking of need and provision for disabled people despite mentioning other characteristics. Further, we have also noted despite referencing working between different housing teams that a highly disconnected and unsupportive approach which causes distress and does not indicate either a well managed wholistic system or that good outcomes can be achieved for more complex needs. Please can the committee ensure that his and the wider gaps in consideration are addressed?

Q3: Continuing from the previous question: **Item 8** at Disability Sheffield we know that there is evidence for certain causes of homelessness that there is a lack of suitable provision for wheelchair users – particularly in emergency provision. again noting the lack of any reference to accessible accommodation procurement I am doubtful that the anticipator part of the Public Sector Equality

Duty features in the definition of the proposal. Considering the efficiencies sought it is vital that the planning and procurement ensures that accessible accommodation is part of the mix across a selection of needs e.g. accessible accommodation might be required by more than just single people and may include dependents. Please can the committee ensure that there is a clear reflection of the need for accessible accommodation within the policy and monitor this after it is delegated to officers?

A1. While information is available as to which properties have been adapted for mobility issues, and that rehousing decisions are considered based on individual need and location of the property, there is a need to develop a full and accessible adaptations register. Due to the interdependencies of this work and the development of the Place Systems Review, work to develop an Adapted Housing Register will commence in 2023/24 but will not be completed until 2024/25.

A2: Our work to address inequality will include analysis of need for and provision for people with disabilities. This is really important as there is a disproportionate risk and impact of homelessness. This will be undertaken collaboratively across SCC and its partners. We intend to co-produce any service redesigns or new developments with people with lived experience and would welcome the inclusion of Disability Sheffield in this and to join our Homelessness Prevention Forum. It is clearly set out in the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action plan that we do need to improve system wide barriers to good experience and outcomes for people with more complex needs – this applies to both within housing services and with other relevant services for example health and care. Again, we intend to review pathways and working practice and would welcome the involvement of Disability Sheffield.

A3: The Action Plan references the need to expand housing options that are suitable for both emergency housing and longer term housing that is suitable to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness or who are homeless. Each new development that is delivered will be subject to a full business case and specification that will address requirements including accessible accommodation for all members of the household.

## **6. CAPITAL FINANCE MONITORING REPORT**

- 6.1 The Housing Capital Programme brings together the 30-year Asset Management and Housing Growth Strategy for Council Housing that sets out the priorities for investment and, to ensure that homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard and, delivery of tenants' priorities to improve the quality of homes and neighbourhoods. Investment priorities are formulated from detailed stock condition and other surveys to ensure effective planning of works, repairs intelligence, life-cycle modelling and, feedback from tenants.

The Housing Investment Programme is co-designed and agreed with tenants

for Council Housing stock.

The Housing Capital Programme is split into three distinct areas of activity; Council Housing Investment (existing stock and assets) and the Council's Stock Increase Programme, funded from the Council's Housing Revenue Account, as described in the annual HRA Business Plan. There is also the Non-HRA Capital Programme which includes the Programme Management, Homes & Loans to private homes and investment in private homes. The table at 1.9 show the overall Housing Capital Programme split between Council Housing Investment, Stock Increase and Non-HRA areas of the programme.

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood services introduced the report which provided an update of the progress against the approved 2022/23 Housing Capital Programme, this is reported regularly as part of the Council's Corporate Capital Programme to Strategy and Resources Committee normally on a quarterly basis. The report focussed on providing an update with regard to spend and progress against the 2022/23 Housing Capital Programme as at end of January 2023. The report also provided an update of the 5-year Housing Capital Programme.

**6.2 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the **Housing** Policy Committee:-

1. Note the 2022-23 Housing Capital Programme forecasting and budget position at the end of period 10.

**6.3 Reasons for Decision**

6.3.1 This report is to provide the Housing Policy Committee members with an update on progress against the approved 5-year approved Capital programme.

**6.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

6.4.1 No alternative options are considered as part of this update report.

**7. MODIFYING PRIVATE RENTED SOLUTIONS POLICY**

7.1 The Service Manager for Supported Housing introduced the report which sought approval from the Housing Policy Committee to amend the Private Rented Solutions Policy to reduce/prevent homelessness in Sheffield and sets out proposals for how the policy will be used.

7.2 Some debate and discussion took place around potential changes and wording to the policy. A vote was taken on the removal of paragraph 8.4 of the policy to which the outcome was: For: 7, Against: 0, Abstentions: 0

**7.3 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the **Housing** Policy Committee:-

1. Adopt the updated Private Rented Solutions Policy to the Appendix 2 to this report, to allow greater flexibility in use of private rented sector property for homelessness prevention and other purposes.
2. Authorise the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services to

amend the Policy where one or more of the reasons prescribed at paragraph 8 of the PRS Policy at Appendix 2 to this report arise **subject to the removal of paragraph 8.4 of the Policy.**

#### 7.4 **Reasons for Decision**

7.4.1 The proposed new PRS policy (Appendix 2) alleviates challenges with the current PRS policy (Appendix 1) as outlined in 1.10 and 1.11.

7.4.2 This will result in more effective use of PRS accommodation in meeting customers' housing needs, particularly around homelessness prevention.

#### 7.5 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

7.5.1 The current PRS Policy (Appendix 1) could be maintained. However as noted in 1.10 there are a range of issues with the current policy.

7.5.2 The proposed officer delegation in the proposed new policy (Appendix 2) could be altered or removed. However, this would mean that any future changes to the policy, even minor, would require a full decision by Housing Policy Committee. We do not believe this would represent best use of the Council's time.

### 8. **HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY- ACTION PLAN**

8.1 The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which sought approval of the draft Action Plan to implement the agreed Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28.

8.2 Some discussion and debate took place between Members of the committee around the approval of the recommendation and suggested amendment which was to note the report as opposed to approve. A vote took place on the original recommendation resulting in the following outcome For: 4, Abstentions: 3  
Against: 0.

8.3 **RESOLVED:** That the **Housing** Policy Committee:-

1. Approve the current draft Action Plan for the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28.

#### 8.4 **Reasons for Decision**

- 8.4.1
- To address the increase in homelessness.
  - To have an Action Plan that supports the strategic city-wide approach to homelessness prevention agreed by all the key partner

#### 8.5 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

8.5.1 It is a statutory requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002 to produce a Homelessness Prevention Strategy every five years. However, it is not a legal requirement to produce an Action Plan. The alternative option would be to not set out the actions, however, this comes with the risk that we could drift from the strategy's vision and targets, and not create any tangible actions on how we aim

to realise the strategy.

## **9. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PITCH FEES**

- 9.1 The Service Manager for Supported Housing introduced the report which set out the proposal for the 2023/24 increase in pitch fees relating to Sheffield City Council's Gypsy and Traveller sites at Longacre and Redmires.

There is no nationally recommended pitch fee level for Gypsy and Traveller pitches as there is for social housing rents. It is left to the discretion of the landlord, subject to the terms of a Written Statement of Agreement between the Council and occupiers of the sites.

- 9.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the **Housing** Policy Committee:-

1. Approve that from 15th May 2023 the fees for each pitch on the Council's Gypsy and Traveller sites at Longacre and Redmires will increase by 7%.

### **9.3 Reasons for Decision**

- 9.3.1 The proposed increase is in accordance with the completion of the local convergence policy agreed by the Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration in February 2012 and the terms of the Written Statement in relation to the Mobile Homes Act 1983 agreed by him in May 2011 and issued to each occupier of both sites.

### **9.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 9.4.1 No increase in pitch fees in 2023/24 – this option would mean that income into the account will not keep pace with cost inflation.

## **10. HNS AND REPAIRS PERFORMANCE REPORT**

- 10.1 The Director of Direct Services introduced the report which provided the Committee with an overview of housing performance for a range of services within the remit of the Committee. The report covered the period up to quarter 3 (October - December) of 2022/2023. The first part of the report provides an analysis of the performance, setting this within both the national and local context in which services are delivered. This part of the report also contains a detailed report about the performance of the Repairs and Maintenance Service which includes performance information up to January 2023.

More detailed appendices are included with data showing comparative data from other landlords and regulatory performance. The report allowed the Committee to understand and comment on the performance delivery of housing services to both tenants and citizens.

- 10.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the **Housing** Policy Committee:-

1. Notes the Performance Report update provided for up to quarter 3 of 2022/2023.
2. Notes the detailed performance report for the Repairs and Maintenance Service.
3. Highlights any issues of concern that they may wish to discuss in future performance reports.

### 10.3 **Reasons for Decision**

10.3.1 The Housing Policy Committee has delegated authority to monitor the performance of Housing services to ensure that:

- The service is delivering for tenants, and that tenant satisfaction is closely monitored.
- Limited resources are maximised due to budgetary pressures.
- The Council is delivering on corporate priorities.
- Performance information is shared with external organisations such as the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman for scrutiny.

### 10.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

10.4.1 The Housing Policy Committee has delegated responsibility for the regular monitoring of data including performance and financial information, and the performance monitoring of Housing (public sector, private sector, and related functions) services. Therefore, no alternative options to the production of this report have been considered.

## 11. **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING REGULATION**

11.1 The city of Sheffield has 242,624 households of which 60,000 are privately rented properties. Improving the living conditions in private rented properties is a priority for our city. This report acknowledges resolutions made at the special meeting of the Council 14 December 2022:

- Adopting Selective Licensing schemes throughout the city, noting that issues in private sector housing have a considerable impact on social housing with badly maintained neighbourhoods leading to even greater pressure on council housing repairs, and believing that the city's neighbourhoods are being let down by rogue private landlords.

And that previously on 26 July 2022 the issue of regulation of private landlords was raised at the North East LAC resulting in a referral to the Housing Policy Committee:

- It was mentioned that the North East Community Plan had little mention of how private landlords had a devastating effect on the community. It was added that Selective Licensing was also a total



failure. Therefore, what strategic actions does the LAC intend to take.

The Service Manager for Private Housing Standards introduced the report which was for noting, it provided a detailed update on the performance of the live Selective Licensing scheme in the London Road, Abbeydale Road & Chesterfield Road (LAC) designated area. In addition, it sets out the challenges we face and the responsibilities of the Private Housing Standards team in respect of regulation of private sector housing of all tenures. And, to provide an update on the work that Private Housing Standards deliver across the city including the powers and legislation available to the service to ensure properties in the private rented sector are safe and well managed.

**11.2 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the **Housing** Policy Committee:-

1. Notes the London Road, Abbeydale Road & Chesterfield Road (LAC) Selective Licensing Project Highlight Report for the period 1 November 2018 to 1 February 2023.
2. Notes progress made, highlight any issues of concern or future priorities in respect of Selective Licensing
3. Notes that the London Road, Abbeydale Road & Chesterfield Road (LAC) Selective Licensing Final Report will be presented to the committee in December 2023

**11.3 Reasons for Decision**

11.3.1 Notes the London Road, Abbeydale Road & Chesterfield Road (LAC) Selective Licensing Project Highlight Report for the period 1 November 2018 to 1 February 2023. To note progress made, highlight any issues of concern or future priorities in respect of Selective Licensing To receive a London Road, Abbeydale Road & Chesterfield Road (LAC) Selective Licensing Final Report in December 2023 To set out the challenges facing the Private Housing Standards team in responding to the challenges of the city-wide condition in private sector housing in Sheffield.

**11.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

11.4.1 None.

**12. UPDATE ON PLACE SYSTEMS REVIEW**

12.1 The Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which updated the Committee on delays to procurement of NEC Housing and the impact on the implementation of NEC Housing. Communication and engagement with members on the implementation of NEC Housing.

**12.2 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the **Housing** Policy Committee:-

1. Note the contents of the report.

**12.3 Reasons for Decision**

12.3.1 Contract for the new integrated Housing Management System has now been

signed with NEC Housing.

12.3.2 Revised timescales for the implementation of NEC Housing phases 1 and 2.1.

12.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

12.4.1 Not applicable.

### **13. WORK PROGRAMME**

13.1 The Principal Democratic Services Officer introduced the report. Some suggestions and discussion took place regarding future items, including tenant participation and the net-zero roadmap. It was agreed to provide a knowledge briefing to the committee on the Sheffield Housing Company.

13.2 It was suggested to add the Net Zero Road Map item from the work programme to next meeting of the committee.

13.3 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Housing Policy Committee:-

1. That the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1;
2. That consideration be given to the further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Part 2 of Appendix 1; and
3. That Members give consideration to any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the next work programme report, for potential addition to the work programme.