

Housing Policy Committee

Meeting held 2 November 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Douglas Johnson (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Nabeela Mowlana (Group Spokesperson), Terry Fox, Barbara Masters, Alison Norris, Paul Turpin, Alan Woodcock and Mazher Iqbal (Substitute Member)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Paul Wood.

2. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

2.1 **RESOLVED:** That the public and press be excluded from the meeting before discussion takes place on the appendix to **item 11** of on the agenda on the grounds that, if the public and press were present during the transaction of such business, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as described in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no formal declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on **14 September 2022** were approved as a correct record.

4.2 The Chair highlighted matters arising. It was observed that that repairs service are carrying out a difficult job under difficult circumstances. The Chair also highlighted that Councillor Alan Woodcock required a response to a question from the previous meeting. Item 11.3.2 of the minutes were illuded to and it was agreed to include this matter into the future workplan.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 Several questions were received from David Cronshaw who did not attend the meeting. The Chair promised a written response.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

6.1 No Members' questions were received.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 The Principal Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which contained the Committee's work programme for consideration and discussion. The aim of the work programme was to show all known, substantive agenda items for forthcoming meetings of the Committee, to enable this committee, other committees, officers, partners, and the public to plan their work with and for the committee.

7.2 The Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services explained that a further report on Damp and Mould would be brought to the January Housing Policy Committee. It was highlighted that a deep dive session would also be arranged prior to this.

7.3 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That:-

1. The Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1;
2. Consideration be given to the further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Part 2 of Appendix 1; and
3. 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.

8. **HOUSING REGULATION AND SCC RESPONSE TO REGULATORY CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided the Housing Policy Committee with an overview of the latest national regulatory developments impacting the social housing sector including how we are preparing and responding to proposed changes. The report also included responses to recent Regulatory Consultations (Consumer Standards and Changes to Regulator Fees Regime). Those could be found at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report.

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

1. Notes the content of the report.
2. Requests that future performance reports to this Committee include a review of risks and issues relating to compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards.
3. Notes the consultation responses that were submitted and the implications on the Housing Revenue Account that were highlighted.
4. Requests that the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services include in the consultation response a clear statement that Government should meet cost of regulation.

8.3 **Reasons for Decision**

8.3.1 To keep Housing Policy Committee up to date on developments in social housing regulation.

8.3.2 To inform the Committee about their role in monitoring compliance against the proposed Consumer Standards.

8.3.3 To discharge the Committee's oversight role with respect to RSH expectations.

8.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

8.4.1 No other options were considered as compliance with the regulatory standards and the Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code is statutory from April 2024.

9. **COMMISSION OF A NEW FURNISHED ACCOMMODATION FRAMEWORK**

9.1 The accommodation manager introduced the report which sought approval for Sheffield City Council to commission a new furnished accommodation framework as outlined in the report.

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

1. Approves the commission of a Furnished Accommodation Framework as outlined and detailed within this report.

9.3 **Reasons for Decision**

9.3.1 This decision will allow us to provide good quality furniture to furnish council homes and provide vulnerable people access to goods to help sustain tenancies and develop thriving communities.

9.3.2 It supports the ability to deliver this service with the service changes meeting service costs and will improve our ability to prevent disruptions in supply through having two nominated contractors for each lot.

9.3.3 Lower purchase prices will also maintain the number of awards that can be granted by the Local Assistance Scheme benefitting more vulnerable impoverished people in the city.

9.3.4 The successful tender and contract awards will benefit vulnerable residents of the city and offer opportunities to develop the Furnished Accommodation Service with other Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords.

9.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

9.4.1 Continue with the current purchasing arrangements. The scheduled recommissioning of these suppliers was 2019 and as highlighted in this report has been delayed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. If the current arrangements were left in place this would potentially result in risks in the supply of items with only one appointed supplier for each of the current lots. The current framework is also not compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, having expired in 2019.

10. **COMMUNITY HEATING METER CONTRACT**

10.1 The Head of Housing Investment and Maintenance introduced the report which sought approval to re-commission a services contract for the management and

administration of meters in properties on the community heating scheme. The current contract will expire in March 2024 and there is no express provision to extend the term. Heat Meters are in all properties across Sheffield which are on the Community Heating Network.

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

1. To approve the commission of a new heat metering contract with a provider to commence no later than March 2024 for a period of 4 years with an estimated value of £1,600,000 as set out in this report.

10.3 **Reasons for Decision**

10.3.1 After considering the nature of this contract and taking on board the essential regulatory compliance/ value for money requirements, the best option for the Council is to commission the contract using a compliant public sector procurement procedure. This will enable the Council to continue to provide essential services to manage and maintain our heat metering services. The procurement of the contract will ensure the Council is operating in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and achieving best value in its procurement of the services.

10.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

10.4.1 **Do nothing** – this is not an option as the Council has the ongoing requirement to maintain heat meters. The current contract is due to expire on 1st March 2024, and the Council are under a duty to procure the contract pursuant to the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Councils Contract Standing Orders.

Self-Deliver - this is not an option; the Council has neither the capacity or expertise to deliver these goods and services.

Extend existing contract – this is not an option as the existing contract does not have an option to extend, and the Council must re-tender the contract in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

11. HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE SAVINGS AND PRESSURES 2024 - 25

11.1 The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided Members with an update on the budget setting process for the revenue budgets within the remit of the Housing Policy Committee. It specifically set out details of the pressures facing the Housing Policy Committee in 2024/25 and asked Members to consider how to mitigate those pressures in meeting their obligations to recommend a balanced budgetary position to the Strategy and Resources committee. The report also included proposals for endorsing a rent increase for Council tenants to the Strategy and Resources committee and subsequently Full Council in February 2024.

11.2 The meeting went into closed session to discuss matters regarding the closed part of the report.

11.3 The meeting was opened back up to formally agree the recommendations

outlined in 11.4. Limb 3 of the recommendation was agreed to be amended to add the additional wording of: 'Notes and endorses for onward work by officers the proposal for'.

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

1. Notes the Housing Revenue Account and Housing General Fund savings proposals/mitigations as set out in this report and that they will be presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee as part of the Council's budget for 2024/25.
2. Request a further report on the Housing Revenue Account Business plan at their December meeting with details of the full capital and revenue expenditure proposals for 2024/25.
3. Notes and endorses for onward work by officers the proposal for a 7.7% rent increase for council tenants in line with the government's Rent Standard and acknowledge that the final decision on council housing rents will be taken at the Full Council in February.

11.5 **Reasons for Decision**

11.5.1 Members are asked to note the unsustainable financial position highlighted by the medium-term financial analysis presented to Strategy and Resources Committee in September 2023. This report and its recommendations, sets out the scale of the challenge ahead, the limited resources available and the difficult decisions that now need to be taken to deliver a balanced HRA and HGF budget for 2024/25.

11.6 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

11.6.1 The Council is required to both set a balanced HRA and GF budget and to ensure that in-year income and expenditure are balanced. No other alternatives were considered.

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