

Housing Policy Committee

Meeting held 14 December 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillors Douglas Johnson (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Nabeela Mowlana (Group Spokesperson), Barbara Masters, Paul Turpin, Alan Woodcock and Sioned-Mair Richards (Substitute Member)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Paul Wood, Cllr Mazer Iqbal and Cllr Alison Norris.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

**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 2 November 2023 were approved as a correct record.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 A petition was received from Akra Shaibi who did not attend the meeting. The petition had received 6 signatures. The Chair read out some of the petition details as follows:

“We the undersigned petition the council to to fix the flats from outside and inside so the rats and mice don’t go in. Block the holes and gaps between our flat and the neighbours. Sort out all the flats instead of just one because the pests come back. Fix the mould and damp problems that we all have. We all pay rent and we need this problem sorted.”

The **Chair responded** with the following:

“The North East Housing Team Environmental Services have also been commissioned by Housing to carry out a full external technical survey of each block and feedback any actions and recommendations to prevent any further infestations in the future. Housing are working with the Repairs Service to ensure that any entry points are sealed.

Prior to baiting all tenants and residents will receive correspondence to support the treatment work.

The Housing Repairs Service are prioritising reports of damp and mould. The service has undertaken work on 38 properties at Verdon Street to date. Where tenants have reported damp and mould in these blocks we aim to attend within 5 working days. A long term solution for the blocks on Verdon Street is being explored and work has been commissioned to look at this.

Officers have visited the block the petition relates to and also the neighbouring 4 blocks. Officers from the team have visited all properties in the 5 blocks, 20 flats per block. They have successfully spoken with the majority of tenants and residents, leaving contact cards for those who have not been at home encouraging them to contact their local Housing office to discuss any concerns they may have.

The Housing team have recorded full details were tenants/residents have mice within their flat and were there are reports of damp and mould.

These reports are being taken very seriously and the Housing team have met on site with officers from our Environmental Team to establish the best treatment for the infestations. Orders have been placed to bait each block at a cost of £1,866 per block.”

- 5.2 Some debate and discussion took place regarding the petition. Members gave comments and asked questions. Officer responses were provided surrounding damp, mould and the ongoing work around tackling infestation. It was stressed that work had been undertaken to the Verdon Street properties prior to the petition being received. It was also explained that the CoL crisis was exacerbating the issues. It was suggested and agreed to receive an update on the response to the petition at the January meeting. It was highlighted that there would be the anticipated updates on damp and mould across the city too. The Chair requested that the petitioner be specifically invited to the January meeting
- 5.3 Alexandra Odelga attended the Committee meeting and asked the following question:

“Is the committee able to give assurance to tenants of Sheffield City Council who have dogs already living with them as their pets or as assistance dogs on 31/12/2023, and whose dogs may fall under the type of XL bully as defined in the statutory instrument, that they will be allowed to keep their dogs in their properties”

The **Chair responded** with:

“This is a topical and relevant question. There has been some work carried out amongst staff within the Housing Service about how we as a council and landlords deal with this issue to safeguard the interest of all tenants and the dogs. The context is that the XL Bully has been added to the list of dangerous dogs and as a council we cannot ignore that and that there needs to be respect for the dog owners and non-dog owners.

The Tenancy Conditions are:

18. Unless you live in sheltered housing, you may keep domestic pets in your home subject to conditions 19-21.

19. You must not keep any animal or number of animals which could cause a danger or nuisance or which is not suitable for your property

20. You must properly look after any animal in or visiting your property and not allow it to do anything which could cause a danger, nuisance or annoyance to other people or to cause damage

21. If we tell you to remove an animal or animals from your home you must do so. You must not allow the animal or animals to return. We will tell you in writing, giving the reasons why and the date by which you must comply.

From 1st February 2024 it will be a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales unless the owner has a Certificate of Exemption. For a tenant to continue to keep an XL Bully dog in their home following the aforementioned date, they must be able to produce the Certificate of Exception on request to Sheffield City Council. In addition, the tenant must, for the lifetime of the dog, hold third party public liability insurance and be able to produce evidence of this on request. That is the framework for making the decisions in.

So there will Not be a complete blanket ban but tight control to keep everyone safe”

- 5.4 The Chair promised a copy of the response in writing. The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services gave some clarity around tenancy conditions and responsibilities and suggested the intention to use letters and bulletins for conveying the correct information. It was also suggested to bring a report to the committee in the New Year regarding this matter.
- 5.5 Maggie Young attended the Committee meeting and asked the following questions:

- 1) What is the current timetable for the start and completion of building work on the GV Estate?
- 2) What is the housing offer for those people who may have to be moved?
- 3) What is the delivery plan for bringing the housing up to EPC Level C?
- 4) What are the proposals for installing renewable energy infrastructure in line with SCC’s commitment to zero carbon by 2030?
- 5) What’s the timetable for delivery of training and job opportunities for young people on the estate?

The **Chair responded** with:

A1: As you will know, inflation in the construction sector has escalated and means the £98 million doesn’t go as far as when the plan was first agreed. As a result, the team has had to re-think a lot of the delivery.

The Gleadless Valley Regeneration Team is working with colleagues in other Council departments such as the Capital Delivery Service, Planning, and Housing Growth to understand construction costs for various capital elements of the project, as well as lead times for beginning major works. At present we are still determining what a phased delivery plan will look like and the cost implications.

This means we can’t give dates for the start of work, never mind the finish.

However, the next things that we should see are (1) demolition work on the Castelayn and Paddock Hill former care homes so the sites can be secured to

deliver new housing and (2) a MUGA (or multi-use games area) on the Spotswood site.

Both should be underway in 2024.

A2: Elected members are agreed that it's essential to deliver new housing that residents can choose to move into before enforcing any clearances of existing homes and that is learning from previous demolition schemes.

A3: As we progress each project, surveys will be carried out to understand the level of investment needed to ensure compliance with Part L of the building regulations. This is an ongoing piece of work.

A4: A commission has been made to the council's external consultant, RLB (Rider Levett Bucknall) to co-develop a 'route map to net zero' for the Council's housing stock. This will provide a basis for asset planning and capital investment.

A lot is yet to be determined. Plans should include the installation of PV (photo voltaic) solar panels. We will need to develop a funding strategy for this, as well as policy for how the energy generated is utilised.

A5: The Gleadless Valley Regeneration Team are in partnership and working collaboratively with Opportunity Sheffield, the DWP and local GV organisations to support an employment and skills package for the people in Gleadless Valley. The funding has been confirmed, is for anyone 16+ and contracts are due to commence early in the New Year. As soon as the delivery partner/s have been confirmed, information on this will be on the Regeneration team's Facebook page and other channels.

It is also worth noting that the council employs around 125 apprentices which is an important way of training up new people to do important jobs.

- 5.6 A written response was promised by the Chair. It was also highlighted that the PERP period was underway.

## **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 Suggestions were made regarding Selective Licensing being moved to the January meeting instead of March. It was expressed that due to the Christmas holiday break it would be extremely difficult. It was agreed to explore other options outside of the meeting. Suggestions and questions were also put forwards regarding Damp

and Mould updates and Housing Strategy Member engagement. It was agreed with current timescales that a Damp and Mould report would be presented at the March meeting. It was also agreed that the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services would circulate a timeline that is currently believed to be right for the Housing Strategy.

7.3 There was discussion around the merits of including a standing item on Damp and Mould on the work programme. The Chair noted that a response to the petition received at the meeting would be added as a new item onto the January meeting workplan, and that while the possibility of a standing item would be considered by the chair, it was not open to the committee to commit future meetings to standing items, and that the work programme is where specific matters are fixed which could be by resolution of the committee.

7.4 **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. 2023/24 Q2 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

8.1 The Head of Accounting introduced the report which brought the Committee up to date with the Council's General Fund Revenue and Housing Revenue Account outturn position for 2023/24 as at Quarter 2.

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

1. Note the updated information and management actions on the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Outturn as described in this report.

### **8.3 Reasons for Decision**

8.3.1 To record formally changes to the Revenue Budget.

### **8.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

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

## **9. CAPITAL FINANCE MONITORING REPORT**

9.1 The Head of Service, Housing Investment and Maintenance introduced the report which explained that the Housing Capital Programme brought together the 5-year Capital Investment and Housing Growth proposals for Council Housing, setting out the priorities for current and future investment.

It outlined that the purpose of the plans was to continue to deliver Decent Homes, tenants' priorities and improving the quality of homes and neighbourhoods. The Housing Capital Programme is split into three distinct areas of activity; Council Housing Investment (existing stock and assets), the Council's Stock Increase Programme, funded from the Council's Housing Revenue Account, as described in the annual HRA Business Plan and the Non-HRA Capital Programme which includes programme management, Homes & Loans to private homes and investment in private homes.

The table at item 2.1 of the report showed the overall Housing Capital Programme split between Council Housing Investment, Stock Increase and Non-HRA areas of the programme.

The purpose of the report was to provide a quarterly update on progress against the approved 2023/24 Housing Capital Programme. The report focussed on providing an update on expenditure and progress against the 2023/24 Housing Capital Programme position at the end of September 2023 (Quarter 2).

The report also provided an update of the 5-year Housing Capital Programme and the final approval of the 2022/23 Housing Capital Programme outturn.

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

1. Note the 2023-24 Housing Capital Programme forecasting and budget position at the end of quarter.
2. Note the update provided for the 5-year capital programme

**9.3 Reasons for Decision**

9.3.1 The report was to provide the Housing Policy Committee members with an update on progress against the 5-year approved Capital programme at the end of Q2 2023/24.

**9.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

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

**10. HNS AND REPAIRS PERFORMANCE REPORTS**

10.1 The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided the Committee with an overview of housing and repairs performance for a range of services within the remit of the Committee. This report covered the period up to quarter 2 (July – September) of 2023/24. The first part of the report provided an analysis of the performance, setting this within both the national and local context in which services are delivered. A detailed appendix report was included with comparative data against other landlords and regulatory performance. The report allowed the Committee to understand and comment on the performance delivery of housing and repairs 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 2 of 2023/24.
2. Highlights any issues of concern that they may wish to receive focussed analysis in future performance report.

### 10.3 **Reasons for Decision**

10.3.1 The Housing Policy Committee has delegated authority to monitor the performance of Housing and Repairs 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. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN**

11.1 The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which set out the 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. Each year the HRA Business Plan is reviewed and updated to set budgets and charges for the year ahead and to provide an updated 5-year plan and 30-year affordability profile. The purpose of this report is to provide the Housing Policy Committee with an update on the current national and local housing context, regulatory requirements, the priorities for Committee action alongside capital and revenue spending plans for 2024/25. The Policy Committee will then be responsible for overseeing the scrutiny and, delivery of those plans on behalf of the Council housing tenants of Sheffield.

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

1. Notes that the HRA Business Plan report for 2024/25, the HRA Business Plan priorities for 2023/24 and HRA Revenue Budget 2023/24 as set out in the Financial Appendix, will go to the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee at its meeting in January 2024, for recommendation to Full Council for approval;
2. Notes that once adopted by Full Council, monitoring delivery of HRA Business Plan priorities will be within the remit of Housing Policy Committee and a regular performance reporting schedule will be approved;
3. Notes the recommendation for the increasing of Council rents for 2024/25 in

line with the Government's Rent Standard.

11.3 **Reasons for Decision**

11.3.1 The 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 budget for 2024/25 and for the overall 30-year viability. The delivery of a balanced HRA budget is dependent on setting a 7.7% rent increase for Council tenants as set out in this report.

11.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

11.4.1 The Council is required to both set a balanced in year HRA budget and to ensure that in-year income and expenditure are balanced over 30 years. No other alternatives were considered.