
Meeting	Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Date	4 December 2024
Present	Councillors Vassie (Vice-Chair), Hook, Moroney, D Myers, Rose, Wilson, Orrell (Substitute), Waller (Substitute), Fenton (Substitute) and Merrett (Substitute)
Apologies	Councillors J Burton, Runciman, Smalley and Wann
In Attendance	Councillor Pavlovic (Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities)
Officers Present	Patrick Looker – Head of Service Finance Katherine Finnie – Principal Accountant Sara Storey – Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Integration Pauline Stuchfield – Director of Housing and Communities Paul Hester – Head of Building Services (remotely)

34. Apologies for Absence (5:32 pm)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J Burton, Runciman, Smalley and Wann, who were substituted respectively by Cllrs Merrett, Waller, Fenton and Orrell. Apologies were also received from Cllr Steels-Walshaw, Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care, as well as from the Director of Public Health and the Head of Housing Delivery and Asset Management.

In the absence of the Chair Cllr J Burton, as Vice-Chair Cllr Vassie took the chair, and the committee elected Cllr Myers as vice-chair for the duration of the meeting.

35. Declarations of Interest (5:33 pm)

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or

disclosable pecuniary interest that they might have in respect of the business on the agenda. None were declared.

36. Public Participation (5:34 pm)

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

37. 2024/25 Finance and Performance Monitor 2 (5:34 pm)

Members considered a report setting out the projected 2024/25 financial position and performance position for the period covering 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.

Officers provided an overview and responded to questions from the committee. It was noted that:

- With reference to the results from the 2023-24 Regulator for Social Housing return, it was agreed that officers would provide members with a link to this information on the York Open Data platform.
- A project was underway to secure savings in Adult Social Care through a strength-based approach to the current review backlog.
- With reference to the table at paragraph 23, clarification was sought on the figures for Forecast Outturn Variance for Direct Payments. Officers agreed to provide this to members and to include a breakdown of the number of people being supported in each service category in future reports.
- Clarification would be provided to members on the percentage increase the average weekly cost per direct payment of £137 represented. It was also noted that a project was underway on Direct Payments to review policies and practice, taking a co-production approach with recipients and their families.
- With reference to the primary drivers of Adult Social Care overspend, it was noted that the main challenge in York was the cost per unit of support paid to external providers, who faced challenges around the living wage, inflationary cost of living pressures, and the upcoming National Insurance changes. A presentation summarising the main costs and pressures within Adult Social Care would be shared with members separately, and officers would explore what could be done to reasons for overspend/underspend in each section in future reports.
- Officers had been advised that the Council would be compensated for increased employer National Insurance contributions for in-house

staff, but full details were still awaited. Engagement was underway with social care providers and the Association of Directors of Adult Social services (ADASS) to assess the likely impact of the changes and what support the Council could offer; it was essential that the best value duty was met and good value was offered to citizens for every penny spent.

- The Council generally did well in terms of efficiency and outcomes, with York rated top by a recent efficiency tool, and comparable data was available for other local authorities; although local circumstances varied. It was important to continue challenging and analysing performance through surveys and other data collection.
- Members expressed concern over the direction of travel of three Public Health performance indicators included in the annex to the report, on the percentage of face-to-face new birth visits undertaken by a health visitor after 14 days, the percentage of eligible population aged 40-74 who received an NHS Health Check, and the percentage of non-opiate users in treatment who successfully completed drug treatment (without representation within 6 months), and it was agreed to request more information on these from the Director of Public Health.

Resolved:

- i. To note the finance and performance information.
- ii. To note that work will continue on identifying savings needed to fully mitigate the forecast overspend.

Reason: To ensure expenditure is kept within the approved budget.

38. Updating the Repairs Policy (6:17 pm)

The committee considered a report seeking members' views on the latest draft of the Responsive Repairs Policy for Tenants of Council Houses.

Officers provided an overview, noting that the draft would be subject to tenant engagement to shape the final version prior to a formal decision on its adoption. In response to questions from members it was noted that:

- 27,000 repairs and servicing appointments on council homes were carried out annually, and a considerable effort was being made to deliver repairs more quickly and on a first visit where possible. The policy aimed to help tenants better understand what they could expect and enable them to hold the Council to account, and was aimed at refreshing and updating the existing repairs policy to make it more customer-facing and to reflect recent social housing sector

changes including the introduction of the Regulator for Social Housing and Awaab's law.

- Of the three repairs categories, 100 per cent of Emergency repair reports were attended within 24 hours and sooner where possible. On average General repairs (within 20 working days) were completed in 11.9 days and there was a current target of 85-90% for completing Planned repairs within 65 working days. The end of a post-Covid backlog in Planned repairs was being reached; for the small number of repairs which ran over 65 working days a process was in place to interact with and reassure residents.
- Updates were sent to tenants by text in the lead-up to work being carried out. Most complaints about the service focussed on poor communication and it was recognised that some residents had been let down in the past, but there was renewed emphasis on improving communication and engagement through tenants' associations, drop-in sessions, newsletters and factsheets, the tenants' scrutiny panel, and in-person surveys around void properties.
- This was a service for which many Councillors received a lot of correspondence especially around out-of-hours repairs, and the need for clarity of expectations and reassurance that help was coming was emphasised. It was confirmed that proposals to improve out-of-hours cover were under consideration by officers.
- Members made several suggestions to increase the accessibility and clarity of the policy for tenants, including inserting a clearer statement of which properties were covered by the policy; reducing jargon and providing hyperlinks to industry definitions where used; and producing a booklet version using photographs and more accessible language and layout.
- It was suggested that the language around tradespeople and contractors being unable to obtain access could be more sensitive to tenants with work and other commitments. The need for sensitivity to individual circumstances and vulnerabilities, including around domestic violence or hate crime, was emphasised. The repairs team recognised that tenants had a range of vulnerabilities, and it was hoped that a customer-first approach would demonstrate improvements in the service.
- Members also suggested that the breakdown of CYC and tenant responsibilities could be more comprehensive, that outside decking could be added to the list of works where CYC permission was required, and that greater clarity could be provided around what constituted an Emergency repair. Communal areas were outside the policy, but officers would ensure that clear information around

relevant contacts and expectations would be made available to tenants where applicable.

- While this was a responsive document about repairs, officers were sensitive to the climate change impact of repairs work, including in the material supply chain and the new electric fleet would help reduce carbon emissions; incorporating climate and energy efficiency into the policy could be considered. Going forward there would be closer working with residents to shape and develop communities, including through the Neighbourhood Model.
- With reference to the use of contractors, the Council had a duty to ensure value for money and other Scrutiny reports had highlighted the need to improve contract management generally. Contractor costs were carefully measured and doing more work in-house in some areas was being considered for future, including possible apprenticeships.
- The stock condition survey was nearly complete and would facilitate a data-led approach to future repair work. It was expected to identify an increase in damp and mould issues and necessary repair work but would provide an essential framework for allocating resources over the coming years.

Resolved: To note the report and request that officers take the committee's feedback and suggestions into consideration in developing the Policy.

Reason: To keep the committee updated on the development of the Responsive Repairs Policy.

39. Update on Void Properties (7:31 pm)

Members considered a report presenting an overview of the current position regarding empty (void) council house properties. Officers provided an overview, and in response to members' questions it was noted that:

- Of 7400 council homes, between 500-600 typically became void during each financial year, with 72 planned voids in the current financial year inclusive of those at Bell Farm and Glen Lodge, where work was due to complete in 2025. There were currently 61 empty council homes, of which eight were ready to be let to tenants; while there would always be fluctuations in void numbers this marked an improvement in performance from the June 2022 figure of 141 empty council homes.

- With reference to timescales, high-demand properties were often re-let within 5-10 working days; it was important to gather as much information as possible before existing tenants moved out in order to process voids quickly. The process could not be truncated except in the case of a direct let. Officers hoped to set a target turnaround of 10 days rising to 20 days where kitchen and bathroom work refits were needed, although currently there was reliance on contractors in meeting these timescales.
- Opportunities presented by voids were being taken to address stock issues and retrofit homes, which should in turn help to reduce void timescales. It should be possible to forecast the financial impact of reduced loss of rent through turning voids around in a shorter timeframe. However, this had to be balanced against the waiting lists and there were emergency cases when people needed the first available suitable home.
- Where possible carpets and other flooring which had been replaced by tenants were left in place, although in some cases these needed to be removed; opportunities to engage with incoming tenants on this would be taken.

Resolved: To note the performance of the voids since 2022, including the current positive position.

Reason: To keep the committee updated.

40. Work Plan (7:59 pm)

The committee considered its work plan for the remainder of 2024/25 municipal year. Several points were raised including:

- A request from the Public Health team that the committee consider an item on the Autism and ADHD Strategy at its meeting of 21 May 2025. It was anticipated that a draft of the strategy would be out for consultation at that point, and that this would present opportunity for members to input and share views on the draft and the engagement plan.
- Members would be contacted to establish their availability for a practical demonstration of telecare equipment to be held early in the new year.
- With reference to the unallocated item on relevant outputs from the LGA Peer Review, it was suggested that this might include member support and training (recommendation 11 of the review), as well as inviting housing and other partners (recommendations 13 and 15) to future meetings of the committee. It was noted that housing partners

would likely be very happy to speak to the committee if a clear brief was provided.

- The work of the Task and Finish Group on Home Care Commissioning had been delayed but members of the task group were planning to pick up this work in the coming weeks, including discussions with relevant officers and trade unions. It was noted that there remained a vacancy for a task group member, and that a date at which the task group would report back to the committee was yet to be determined.

Resolved:

- i. To note the work plan.
- ii. To consider the suggested item on the Autism and ADHD Strategy at the committee's meeting of 21 May 2025.

Reason: To keep the committee's work plan updated.

Cllr C Vassie, Vice-Chair

[The meeting started at 5.32 pm and finished at 8.08 pm].