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| Meeting | Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Date    | 21 September 2022                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Present | Councillors Fenton (Chair), Pavlovic (Vice-Chair), Vassie, Fitzpatrick, Cuthbertson and Wells<br><br>Councillors K Taylor, Daubeney, Hook, Kilbane and Craghill<br><br>Officers Tracey Carter Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration<br>Michael Jones Head of Housing Delivery and Asset Management<br>Becky Eades Head of Planning and Development Services<br>Patrick Looker Head of Service Finance |

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### **1. Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest or other registrable interest they might have had in respect of business on this agenda, if they had not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. Cllr Pavlovic declared that he is employed by Rachel Maskell MP, who has a private members bill related to short-term holiday lets.

### **2. Minutes (17:33)**

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 19 July 2022 be approved and signed as an accurate record.

### **3. Public Participation (17:35)**

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Marie-Colette McMahon spoke on agenda item 5 - a Central government Consultation on Developing a tourist accommodation registration scheme in England. Ms McMahon spoke on the growth of holiday lets in the city and

explained that the enforcement process in England is very difficult, especially in comparison to countries like France.

#### **4. Central Government Consultation on Developing a tourist accommodation registration scheme in England (17:49)**

Members discussed a number of benefits and challenges presented by the rise in short-term and holiday lettings seen in England in the last 10 to 15 years.

The Committee discussed the impact of these lettings on the local housing market. Concerns were raised over the rise in section 21 evictions and lack of available properties to rent in the city as a result of landlords and investors favouring short-term and holiday lettings. Members argued that housing prices in the city are already a problem, with holiday lets being one of the contributing factors, and if unregulated, the problem will exacerbate.

They also considered the percentage of short-term and holiday lettings taking up the private sector dwelling stock as they are concentrated in city centre wards where the percentage is higher than 2.18% mentioned and were wary of minimising the problem. Officers agreed to amend the 2% figure within the consultation response and amend wording to ensure that the Councils response could not be interpreted as having downplayed this issue. Officers will also include information on the reduction in accommodation for key workers, such as hospital and hospitality staff, in city centre wards.

A number of adverse impacts on local communities and residents were highlighted. Members discussed the impact on council income if premises switch to paying business rates instead of council tax alongside problems with parking availability. The issue of community cohesion and participation with the rise of short term lets, especially in the city centre wards was also mentioned. Officers stated that they will amend the response to include these concerns and incorporate some evidence of measures taken in other cities to maintain council income.

Members explained that some small businesses, such as hotels and B&Bs, have been negatively impacted by the rise of short-term and holiday lets, which is affecting the local economy and should be noted in the consultation.

It was reported that without changes in legislation and planning guidance, there is no easy solution to curb the growth of short-term and holiday lets.

Officers explained that they may be able to alter their enforcement process and priorities but they are limited by regulations.

Residents have asked for clarification on, and access to, information on these types of lettings within legislation so that communities can be more empowered to take action. Officers explained that it is difficult to provide the information as they need to be analysed on a case-by-case basis and not much else can be done without changes in regulations.

Resolved:

- i) The Central government Consultation on Developing a tourist accommodation registration scheme in England to be noted.
- ii) Changes agreed by the Committee to be included in the response Consultation paper.

Reason: To provide evidence on the benefits and challenges presented by the rise in short-term and holiday lettings which will inform the development of policy options by the government later in the year.

## **5. 2022/23 Finance and Performance Monitor 1 (19:10)**

Officers presented the main points of the report, and members began discussion of the item. Members queried turnaround time for void properties and officers confirmed that there is an ongoing process to upgrade the void properties and there is a programme to oversee this. The progress is not as immediate as officers hoped but the turnaround time had improved in the last 4 weeks.

Members welcomed the development of new affordable homes in the city but highlighted the shortage of people with the skills to retrofit properties and the need to focus on the training of new people. Members proposed highlighting this report to the Executive to promote the training as part of the proposed Devolution Deal and the Committee agreed to communicate this.

Concerns were raised around the number of households with dependent children in temporary accommodation. Officers noted they would need to check with their records regarding where and how many households with dependent children were in temporary accommodation and would provide an update to the Committee via email.

Members queried the £121.5m debt figure that HRA incurred whether there was any interest on that and officers confirmed that £4m is being paid in interest.

The Committee raised questions regarding the effect of the increase in the cost of living. Officers commented that the gas and energy market is volatile and it is difficult to predict expenditure, explaining that there was a 120% increase in electricity and 400% increase in gas in April 2022, further increases have been mitigated from October 2022-March 2023 but there is still a lot of uncertainty.

Officers also stated that rent arrears are also on the rise due to the increase in living costs. They explained that recovery activities are taking place as the income is needed to spend on core services but that it is difficult to enforce this due to the unprecedented rises and risk of increasing housing insecurity during the cost of living crisis. Members were informed that there is a government consultation taking place on rent increases and the Committee discussed whether there was any support from central government to support Council's and Council tenants relating to rent. Officers noted that there was no specific support they were aware of.

Resolved:

- i. That the financial and performance management position across Housing & Community Safety be noted.
- ii. That a further update relating to data on dependent children in temporary accommodation be shared with the committee.

Reason: To ensure expenditure is kept within the approved budget and performance is effectively scrutinised.

## **6. Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan (19:30)**

Resolved:

- i. That the Committee work plan be noted.

Reason: To ensure the Committee has a program of work for 2022-23.

Cllr Fenton, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.32 pm and finished at 7.31 pm].