
Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods
Date	15 September 2020
Present	Councillor Craghill (Executive Member)

5. Declarations of Interest

The Executive Member was asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or discloseable pecuniary interest that they might have in respect of the business on the agenda. None were declared.

6. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the previous Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods, held on 30 June 2020, be approved and then signed by the Executive Member at a later date.

7. Public Participation

It was reported there was one registration to speak under Public Participation. Cllr Pavlovic, Ward Member for Hull Road, spoke on agenda item 4. He noted that the targeted relief was a considerable relief to residents. He highlighted the impact of COVID on residents facing financial difficulties. He asked for a number of points of clarification in relation to how many residents were eligible for the support package. He also asked if the council directly approached tenants before they fell into possible rent arrears.

The Executive Member thanked Cllr Pavlovic for his comments.

8. Targeted financial support for people living in Council homes

The Executive Member considered a report that outlined the Councils approach to financial hardship for people who live in council homes during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery period. The report detailed a proposal for creation of a targeted hardship fund.

The Head of Housing detailed the support available to council tenants and noted that this had been in place during the COVID-19 outbreak in the form of welfare calls of which 68% of the 7200 council tenants had been contacted by council staff. He added that the data for this period was being analysed. An update was given on the current position and it was noted that there had been an increase of 400 families in rent arrears (2593 in arrears as at 22 March 2020 and 2960 as at 13 September 2020) and within that period a decrease in the amount owed in arrears with a modest decrease in arrears over the last month.

The work undertaken by officers to support and advise tenants on benefits available to them was highlighted. The Executive Member welcomed the work being undertaken and support being offered to people living in council homes. In response to a question from her concerning the MHCLG, the Head of Housing confirmed that the implementation of a Housing Hardship Fund as set out in Annex A did not require approval from MHCLG.

Resolved:

- i. That the support currently available to people who live in council homes from the Housing Service be noted.
- ii. That the implementation of a Housing Hardship Fund as set out in Annex A be approved.

Reason: To ensure that further targeted support for people who live in council homes can be offered during the Covid recovery period whilst also ensuring appropriate financial controls are in place.

9. Homeless Review 2019-20

The Executive Member considered a report that provided an overview of the previous year's operation and performance against targets within homeless services within the context of the Homeless Strategy 2018-2023 as well as targets for the current financial year.

The Service Manager, Housing Options and Support gave an overview of the report. The Executive Member welcomed the work that had been undertaken to reduce homelessness and she noted the challenges to come post COVID-19.

Resolved:

- i. That the progress made by the service be noted.

- ii. That the priorities and targets for 2020/21 as set out in paragraph 31 of the report be agreed.

Reason: To ensure the council continues to adhere to its statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, to reduce rough sleeping in the city and supports the most vulnerable in society.

Cllr Craghill, Chair

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.25 am].