

Meeting	Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	14 March 2023
Present	Councillors Fenton (Chair), Pavlovic (Vice-Chair), Baker, Cuthbertson, Fitzpatrick, Vassie and Wells Councillor Craghill
Officers in attendance	Tracey Carter, Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration Michael Jones, Head of Housing Delivery and Asset Management Patrick Looker, Head of Service Finance Denis Southall, Head of Housing

26. Declarations of Interest (17:35)

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 already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. None were declared.

27. Minutes (17:35)

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 23 January 2023 be approved and signed as an accurate record.

28. Public Participation (17:37)

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

29. 2022/23 Finance and Performance Monitor Q3 (17:37)

Members considered a report which detailed the Q3 2022-23 monitoring position for both finance and performance across Housing and Community Safety. The Head of Service Finance gave an overview of the report and was present to answer questions alongside the Director of Housing,

Economy and Regeneration and the Head of Housing Delivery and Asset Management.

In response to questions from Members, Officers noted that:

- There were 85 void properties at the end of December 2022 and there were long term voids in Glen Lodge and Bell Farm, both of which required complex and significant work.
- The sustainable procurement strategy was embedded in the Council's daily practice and it was working with partners to make the strategy successful. Devolution would also bring some opportunity to manage housing costs.
- Procurement contracts were awarded on a multi-year basis and assessments were completed on an ongoing basis to ensure that competitive purchasing was achieved.
- The housing team were struggling to recruit staff leading to long term vacancies but the Council's directly employed trade team was nearly at full complement.
- Parity Project's Portfolio was procured to extrapolate information and create a model of all housing stock to better understand stock and EPC ratings in the city.
- The Local Plan would be integrated with regeneration activities once it was agreed.

Resolved:

- i. That the financial and performance management position across Housing & Community Safety be noted.

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

30. Update on Capital Programme and Damp and Mould (18:08)

Members considered a report which was an update on this year's capital investment programme as well as providing incidences of damp and mould in both Council housing stock and the private rented sector. The Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration presented the report and provided the Committee with an agenda supplement which detailed the response to further questions the Council received from the Regulator of Social Housing. She was present to answer questions alongside the Head of Housing Delivery and Asset Management and the Head of Housing.

The Committee first discussed the capital investment programme and home modernisation. In response to questions, Officers explained that Open Housing was a new housing system that detailed Council housing stock and tenant circumstances, allowing the Council to know its priority investments a year in advance. They went on to state that there could be a need to reprioritise the projects and that there was an ambition to revisit the properties where tenants declined home modernisation work during Covid-19. There were delays in home modernisation work due to several factors, including due to the procurement of new contracts, but Officers reassured Members that kitchen and bathroom components were being replaced within its life-cycle.

Members then discussed damp and mould issues in social tenants homes. In response to questions from the Committee, Officers explained the difference between category 1 and 2 in homes under the Housing Health and Safety Standards and stated that there were 118 homes which required structural damp and mould works. In terms of costing, they explained that the Council had previously been spending £30k-£40k on fixing standing water in properties but that they were in the process of trying to reduce costs and get through more work. Officers concluded that the Council would have to prioritise properties and repairs, and that there was no additional financial assistance from the Government.

Mould and damp issues in the private rented sector were then discussed by the Committee and Officers stated that they had taken some enforcement action on homes but that it was often the last resort. They went on to explain that the expansion of the house in multiple occupation licensing scheme meant more homes were being inspected and it gave the Council a greater ability to force action. Members then enquired about the Gypsy Traveller community and Officers stated that the Council own and manage the sites but that the actual caravans were the responsibility of the occupants so any damp/mould issues would be their responsibility.

Resolved:

- i. That the contents of the report be noted.

Reason: To keep the Committee updated on this year's capital investment programme and on the damp and mould issues in social and private sector homes.

31. Housing Management Pilot (18:55)

Members considered a report which provided a summary of the Housing Management Pilot scheme. The Head of Housing presented the report and

was present to answer questions alongside the Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration.

In response to questions from Members, Officers noted that:

- The Council was looking at developing ways in which residents could contact their housing management officer (HMO), including through the development of the housing portal.
- The housing team was working with other agencies, including Local Area Coordinators, in supporting tenants through the resettlement routes and the housing first model to ensure the pilot was successful. They were also developing protocols for youth homelessness.
- They would look at the naming of the HMO so that tenants were better informed of the services it provided.
- Housing management looked at a range of models and best practices in developing the pilot and asked staff members to design the model. Staff members volunteered for the HMO roles and they were enthusiastic about the project.

Members also requested that Officers share the number of tenants placed in each of the three categories and the names of the HMOs in each ward, which the Officers had agreed to do.

Resolved:

- i. That the contents of the report be noted.
- ii. That Officers share further information regarding HMOs as above.

Reason: To keep the Committee updated on the Housing Management Service pilot.

Councillor Fenton, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.35 pm and finished at 7.29 pm].