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Meeting	Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	19 July 2022
Present	Councillors Fenton (Chair), Pavlovic (Vice-Chair), Vassie, Fitzpatrick and Cuthbertson Councillor Craghill Officers Tracey Carter Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration Patrick Looker Head of Service Finance Michael Jones Head of Housing Delivery and Asset Management Dennis Southall Head of Housing Management Andrew Bebbington Housing Policy Officer Fiona Phillips Assistant Director - Consultant in Public Health Leigh Bell Public Health Specialist Practitioner Advanced
Apologies	Councillors Baker and Norman

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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 registerable 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. None were declared.

### **2. Minutes**

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

### **3. Public Participation**

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

#### **4. Finance and Performance Outturn 2021-22**

The Committee raised questions regarding the current amount of rent arrears, officers confirmed that these were at about £1.6 million and was due to a number of factors. These included decisions such as to limit actions during the pandemic to avoid making individuals homeless and a new computer system across the department which was still being embedded. It was confirmed that the Council had a key performance indicator to collect rents, but with the cost of living crisis officers would aim to review individual situations in the round to avoid making families situations worse. 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.

A range of issues and challenges were discussed relating to Building Services relating to a series of over and underspends due to the volume of work, staffing and material resources, and issues relating to procurement. Officers confirmed that action plans were being developed to address a range of challenges. Members focused on staffing and recruitment challenges and discussed whether sufficient work was being undertaken to encourage the training of skills across the city. Members enquired as to whether closer ties could be established with York College around access to apprentices.

Officers confirmed that the Council faced challenges in relation to its current pay scales not matching private sector pay offers, they agreed with the importance of the Council needing to develop skills and highlighted the Council's drive to recruit apprentices. It was also confirmed that the Council needed to develop new offers to staff to improve retention. The need to develop new skills around delivery of more energy efficient homes was noted by officers and they confirmed that funding from the local government association had been achieved to work with York College to develop training programmes relating to carbon reducing building techniques.

Data on anti-social behaviour and hate crime was enquired about, members asked if an update could be provided to the Committee expanding on the data provided in the report as to the Council's performance in handling hate crimes due to data suggesting York was performing poorly as opposed to other comparable authorities. It was confirmed that additional detail would be provided to the Committee and a future report could be considered if required.

Resolved:

- i. That the Finance and Performance Outturn 2021-22 be noted.
- ii. That a further update relating to data on hate crimes and anti-social behaviour be shared with the Committee.

Reason: To ensure expenditure is kept within the approved budget and to determine whether the Committee needs to consider further how the Council reduces hate crime and anti-social behaviour in the city.

## **5. Housing energy efficient retrofit action plan**

The importance of housing energy efficient retrofit was highlighted to address carbon usage and to reduce energy bills which were a significant contributor to the current cost of living crisis. Officers highlighted that the Council had been successful in applying for a series of grants to fund programmes to improve the energy efficiency of Council homes. It was confirmed that the Council had collated a lot more data on the Councils housing stock which provided useful information about the work that was required and where. The cost of retrofitting every property was identified by officers as being significant and it was suggested that external funding would be required to deliver the developing action plan.

Members discussed what work could be undertaken to encourage residents to support retrofit actions in their homes, be this Council tenants or private homes. An example of the work undertaken by Cartas in Germany was highlighted which employed people who had experienced poverty to speak to residents about the benefits of retrofit work. Officers noted that the work that had been undertaken so far in gathering data was crucial to understand the kinds of interventions which were possible and were required, they confirmed that there was a clear opportunity moving forward, now this data had been gathered, for resident engagement in the action plan.

The negative health issues relating to fuel poverty was discussed. Cold homes were confirmed to exacerbate a great many health conditions and this has a knock on effect on hospital admissions. With retrofitting it was confirmed that the Council was aiming to tackle the least efficient homes first as this should give the biggest impact for the city subject to the work that can be delivered on different house types.

Members enquired as to whether the Council had the relevant skills currently to deliver retrofit and what models such as an energysprong model could be used. The committee raised the current role of void properties and whether these were ideal homes while no one was living in them to retrofit and build up a skilled workforce. Officers noted that due to the many different types of homes that this would currently require individual design plans for individual homes and that there was a pressing need due to the housing waiting list for homes to be made ready for tenants as soon as possible. It was noted that the Council would need to develop skills for retrofitting internally and that external contractors would likely be required for some work. Officers did confirm that at a future stage of the programme newly void properties could be targeted for retrofit when they return to the Council.

Resolved:

- i. Noted the progress to date on delivering retrofit works within council homes alongside the development of further analysis and options to deliver further improvements this year and beyond.

Reason: To deliver the council's ambitions for minimising tenants' energy bills, building the local green economy and retrofit supply chains, and reducing carbon emissions in the City.

- ii. Noted the ongoing preparation for a Social Housing Decarbonisation Wave 2 bid following the council's successful application for Wave 1 funding and that a business case for this investment will be brought forward later this year.

Reason: Grant funding of up to 50% of total costs can substantially increase the pace of retrofit improvements carried out in HRA stock.

- iii. Noted the intention to submit a bid through the anticipated Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund "digitalisation" programme for building performance monitoring and data analytics technology. This would need to be supported by HRA investment and a business case will be brought forward for approval prior to committing to this programme of works.

Reason: This technology can support better informed forecasting of residents' energy bill savings following retrofit works. This will enable leverage of financial opportunities and facilitate learning

opportunities as well as supporting the most effective investment in improvement works.

- iv. Noted the intention to continue work towards HRA stock decarbonisation within the Retrofit Action Plan including commissioning of an evidence base to support this.

Reason: To identify long-term investment priorities and build on the existing stock analysis, and to provide net zero pathway options.

## **6. Discussion Report for Proposed Scrutiny Review**

The Committee discussed the proposal for the scope of a scrutiny review into Resilient Communities. The Committee had originally proposed a review in an informal Forum meeting of the committee on 14 December 2021. The Committee noted that the scope for reviewing how to build resilient communities would be wide and could focus on a number of areas such as the material fabric of Council estates like green spaces and community buildings to what support is provided to residents with things such as mental health issues or substance abuse. The Councils resettlement programme was highlighted and the importance of effective support to those that had gone through the programme. It was also agreed that the review should consider which areas in the city had lower issues of anti-social behaviour and whether lessons could be learned from these areas.

Resolved:

- i. That the chair and vice chair of the Committee discuss with Committee members to arrange who will lead on the review.

Reason: To allow the Committee to undertake a Scrutiny Review into the topic of creating resilient communities.

## **7. Work Plan**

Resolved:

- i. That the Committee work plan be noted.

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

Cllr Fenton, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.51 pm].