
Meeting	Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	22 July 2019
Present	Councillors Fenton (Chair), Pavlovic (Vice-Chair), Baker, Vassie, Wells, Musson and Waudly
Apologies	Councillor Mason

6. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on this agenda. None were declared.

7. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 24 June 2019, be approved and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

The Chair raised a point for clarification from the previous meeting.

- It was noted that the correct figure of new homes, in relation to the Housing Development Programme, was 650.

8. Public Participation

It was noted that there had been no registrations to speak under the general remit of the committee within the Council's Public Participation Scheme. The Chair noted that he would invite speakers registered on individual items to speak at the relevant point in the meeting.

9. Attendance of Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods

Cllr Denise Craghill, The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods was in attendance alongside the Assistant Director

for Housing and Community Safety, to present her challenges and priorities within this portfolio area.

Members asked what impact the new Design Guide will have on developments such as Lowfield, where work has already begun. The Executive Member noted that it may not reach the same standards but they will have a 'fabric first' approach and be above regulations. Unfortunately, as the specification was written prior to the creation of the design guide and could not now be incorporated with the chosen contractor without significant costs being incurred.

When asked to state one main priority, The Executive Member stated that increasing the level of affordable housing and zero-carbon housing in the city were both key priorities.

In response to questions regarding a Council Housing Company, the Executive Member noted that there are many different types of company that could be considered, with positives and negatives to each. It was also noted that if this was the chosen route, it would be important to ensure the most advantageous type of company was chosen and it did not jeopardise the Housing Revenue Account in any way.

The Executive Member was asked to look into the Modern Slavery Charter and she noted that she would be very happy to do this. Additionally it was noted that there was lots of work developing in this area within the Council's Private Sector Housing Team.

The Assistant Director was asked to respond to a written representation from Gwen Vardigans, a local resident, on the powers of the Council to restrict or suspend the Right to Buy Scheme. The Assistant Director stated that the Right to Buy scheme is part of national legislation and it cannot be restricted or suspended by Local Authorities other than where certain types of accommodation are exempt.

Members also asked whether there was a risk of the Authority losing out to Right to Buy, in terms of the value of assets and their sale price. The Assistant Director noted that Local Authorities recoup their costs under the Right to Buy legislation and (even with discount) residents will not be able to purchase under right to buy at less than the cost to build.

In relation to the number of residents on the housing waiting list who may be staying in B&B style accommodation, the Assistant Director

noted that there are currently 197 people in Gold Band (the highest priority for Housing) and there were perhaps 1 or 2 who would currently be living in B&B accommodation. It was also noted that the new temporary accommodation at James Street was expected to be ready in October.

Members asked whether there were any specific targets relating the Decent Homes Standards. The Executive Member stated that a stock condition survey is currently being undertaken and it would be prudent to wait for the results of this survey prior to agreeing any particular targets. It was also noted that the numbers of homes not meeting the standards were likely to decrease once the stock condition survey had clarified their current state.

In response to a question regarding priorities with the Safer York Partnership, the Executive Members noted in particular the need to work on anti-social behaviour and County Lines with a focus on closer agency working.

In relation to a question on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), the Executive Member highlighted the importance of the Council's role in helping to prevent and reduce the levels of ASB in the City. In addition it was noted that the Council can help support and strengthen communities and improve the economy and quality of life for residents.

Regarding the standards for the Private Rented Sector, the Assistant Director clarified that there are national housing standards that apply to private housing and private renters can contact the Council if they believe Landlords are not meeting standards.

In a discussion on Energy Efficient and Sustainable Housing, the Executive Member noted the work that was currently being undertaken by the Private Sector Housing Team and agreed with Members of the Committee that there was a skills gap in sustainable building in the city and this could be explored through training and apprenticeships.

Finally the Executive member was asked to clarify the budget of the YorHome scheme and it was noted that the Executive Member would look into this and report back to the committee.

10. Year End Finance and Performance Monitoring Report

Members received the Year End Finance and Performance Monitoring Report for 2018/19. The Head of Business Intelligence and the Accountant for Housing and Community Safety were in attendance to present the report.

In response to member questions regarding the Talk About Panel, officers made the following comments:

- That the panel is designed to be a representative sample of the population and involves somewhere between 900-1200 residents
- That the response rate is around 60%

Officers noted that questions regarding how we communicate plans to resolve concerns raised by the panel to residents, would be more appropriate for strategic leaders and communications team to answer.

Members also requested some further information around the increase in violence against people, officers stated that they would be happy to circulate some information on this.

11. Housing Delivery Programme- Design Manual

The committee welcomed Caroline Newnham (Abbeyfields Society), Phil Lacey (York Housing Association) and Phil Bixby (Constructive Individuals Architects) to the meeting to take part in a round the table discussion on the new Housing Delivery Design Manual.

Michael Jones, Head of Housing Delivery, was also in attendance and began by introducing the topic and explaining to Members that this was a draft of the Design Manual and that thoughts would be most welcome.

The Chair decided to take each objective of the manual individually and invited comments from Members and guests.

Meeting Housing Need

In response to initial comments, the officer highlighted that the figures within this section were based on high level assumptions as there were unknowns at this stage on delivery costs and numbers of houses. It was also noted that the figure of £150 million for the programme included both land acquisition as well as development.

In response to comments on the percentage of affordable housing, the officer stated that the 40% noted was the minimum and it certainly wasn't a limit. The blend of market sale and affordable housing was designed to help create a sustainable long term delivery model where the money from market sale properties can help develop more housing sites in the future.

Members also asked about Public Engagement and the officer noted that the Council have recently appointed a new architecture practice that they will be working with for future phases. As part of that procurement process, the practice would be bringing in a specialist on public engagement and that a draft public engagement strategy was currently being developed.

Creating and Connecting Communities

Phil Lacey praised the Council for enforcing the 'tenure blind' element of section 106 and also the thought of 'play streets'.

Members noted the omission of urban food production in the manual and officers stated that they would want that to be brought forward as part of the Council's consultation, to ensure that it is something that is wanted in the community and is sustainable in the long term.

Members also discussed additional community or commercial facilities within developments and it was noted that it was important to look at each development on a site by site basis, mapping facilities in the area to begin with and ensuring that any additional services or facilities offered do not detract from communities that already exist, where connectivity with an existing community / services might be a better option.

Sustainable Development

Phil Bixby stated that he thought Climate resilience should be mentioned in the manual but was pleased to see the desire for passive house standards mentioned.

Officers stated that the architectural company they are working with had recently delivered a passive house scheme in Norwich and they are bringing that learning to York.

Members, officers and guests agreed it would be important to develop local sustainable building skill as there was a current gap in skills, not just in York, but nationwide.

Active and Sustainable Travel

Members discussed the provision for cycle storage and praised the inclusion of a higher minimal standard within developments. Car usage and parking within developments was also discussed and how the manual could be used to encourage developments with less car parking available.

It was noted by the Head of Housing Delivery that there will always be a need to evaluate each site independently and judge provision accordingly.

Healthy Placemaking

Members discussed the provision of open spaces and how this would be decided and mentioned the importance of protecting bio-diversity and pollinators. It was also noted that trees should be considered an important part of Healthy Placemaking and Members said they would be pleased to see this added to the manual.

The design of houses was also mentioned and the importance of aesthetics in the York environment, note was again given to the recent passive house development in Norwich, which was regarded as having successfully balanced sustainability and design.

It was noted by the officer, that each site needed to be judged separately, looking at what the need of the local area was and how the development could either help provide open space or link into existing ones.

12. Older Persons Accommodation Needs Update

Members received a report on the Older Person's Accommodation Programme, setting out a plan for engagement and consultation with residents to help shape future developments.

Vicky Japes, Head of the Older Person's Accommodation Programme and Phil Hykes were in attendance to present the report. Officers explained that this consultation was now live and they would appreciate thoughts from Members.

The Chair noted to officers that it would be worth contacting ward members and local providers regarding the consultation.

Members were keen to hear officers views on the consultation around technology and artificial intelligence in the home, particularly on what the Council's approach would be if a majority of responses reacted negatively. Officers noted that there are a number of misconceptions, and should responses be negative, perhaps a myth-busting exercise would be of value.

In response to questions on the need for Nursing and Residential Care and benchmarking on provision, officers stated that York was in a similar position to other authorities in the north of the country. It was noted that the consultation will play an important part in helping understand these statistics.

13. Work Plan

The committee considered the Work Plan for 2019/20 and made the following amendments:

- The HMO Implementation Update would be brought forward to November
- The Housing Needs and Availability report will be considered in December

Cllr S Fenton, Chair

[The meeting started at 17:30 and finished at 19:40].

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