

Meeting	Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	25 November 2019
Present	Councillors Fenton (Chair), Pavlovic (Vice-Chair), Baker, Mason (present for agenda items 6,7,8,minute 31,32 and 33) Wells and Musson

26. Declarations of Interest

Members were 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.

27. Minutes

The Chair requested that the following amendments be made to the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2019; on page 4, that 'commuter sums' be changed to 'commuted sums' also that the start time of the meeting be changed from '5.01pm' to '5.31pm'. Subject to these amendments, it was:

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meetings of the committee held on:

- 28 October 2019, and
- 23 September 2019.

be approved and signed as a correct record.

28. Public Participation

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

29. Older Persons Accommodation Survey Update

Further to an engagement and consultation programme to better understand the accommodation needs of the city's older

residents, members received the report which presented the results of this survey and outlined how that research could shape the future work of the Older Person's Accommodation Programme. Vicky Japes, Head of Older Persons Accommodation and Phillip Pyke, Older Persons Accommodation Intern, were in attendance to present the report and to respond to questions.

The following information was provided in response to questions from committee members:

- Approximately 500 questionnaire responses had been received. In addition, interviews were undertaken to gain qualitative data, quotes and in depth personal insights.
- 81 per cent of the City's residents aged 75+ are home owners. 29 per cent of the survey respondents wanted to stay in their existing home.
Some learning points from the survey are that in hindsight the consultation would have asked people about their existing living circumstances. Also, people want the opportunity to consider their living arrangements at an earlier stage rather than when they are in their seventies or at crisis point.
- Overall, people wanted small, safe, manageable accommodation.
- There was a lack of awareness of the various accommodation options. As a result of this, the council would produce a directory of all accommodation options available, once people understand options, there may be further changes in demand.
- People preferred to receive their information from 'Age UK' as they were considered to be the most trusted source of information providers. Age UK would be a delivery partner for the directory of accommodation options and the 'Older Persons Assembly' were also happy to endorse this and take it forward.
- 80 percent of York's older residents had expressed that they were receptive to trailing new technology to assist them. Officers provided lots of examples of how this could work, from options built into the design like plug sockets near windows to voice activate the blinds, to smart speakers to provide reminders to take medication or drink water.
- Sensors could be fitted under the stairs to monitor how long it takes for a resident to walk down the stairs and may show when someone is a lot slower. This information could be

helpful to support care assessments leading to meaningful, accurate conversations.

- The action plan at paragraph 18 of the officer report had been endorsed by the Executive member for Adult Social Care and Health. The Head of Older Persons Accommodation and her team would continue to work on these actions and would provide an update in due course.

Resolved:

That the committee:

- (i) Noted and commented on the Older Persons Accommodation Needs report and the results of the engagement work.
- (ii) Considered how the consultation responses could be used to inform the future of the Older Person's Accommodation Programme.

Reason: To keep Members informed of findings from the consultation programme to better understand the accommodation needs of the city's older residents.

30. Extension of HMO Licensing the First Year

Members received an information paper advising on progress during the first year of the extension of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing to properties with 5 or more occupants forming more than one household irrespective of the number of storeys.

Ruth Abbot, Housing Standards and Adaptation Manager and Tom Brittain, Assistant Director for Housing and Community Safety were in attendance to present the report and to respond to questions.

The following information was provided in response to questions from committee members:

- Landlords and housing agencies are invited to attend various training sessions held at West Offices, for example, fire hazard training – 124 people had attended the last session and there were a number of people on the waiting list.

- Officers had hoped that the Code of Practice would have prepared landlords better.
- All relevant properties would be required to have been registered for a licence within 18 months. Officers had a list of those who they considered should be licensed and were following that up.
- Officers explained that they take into account a landlord's history of compliance when issuing a licence.
- At the moment officers issue mandatory licencing. A further licencing process would be where officers had determined, in consultation with legal services, that there is a case. This would involve putting a case together, informing the applicant and consulting on that decision for 30 days. This is open to challenge.
- To extend the process of inspection would require more enforcement officers, trained to the right level. Enforcement is not covered through the licencing fee. At the moment officers do desk top analysis to make a decision on whether enforcement officers are required to visit.
- Officers confirmed that the current pace of inspections was good.
- Key aspects which were not covered by licencing were modern slavery, car wash workers and food workers.
- Officers mentioned the need to consider the intelligence received and landlords below their radar.
- Information regarding how to report concerns is available on the council's website. Once a concern is reported, a decision is made regarding how this is prioritised. Officers had prioritising the properties with the most concerns first. A follow up might not necessarily lead to a visit.
- A licence lasts for up to 5 years. If officers have issued a hazardous awareness notice the landlord would be issued with a fixed period of time to address this and they would be required to evidence this.
- Officers confirmed that the majority of issues arise from accidental landlords with a small property portfolio, who claim to be unaware of their legal obligations.

Members considered that if someone is receiving some income from renting a property that they should be aware of and responsible for their legal obligations. The chair requested a further update report to be received by this committee in June/July next year. Depending on what the findings indicate,

the committee may consider expanding licensing and enforcement.

Resolved

That the committee:

- (i) Noted the information only report.
- (ii) Requested an update report to be received in June/July next year.

Reason: To ensure that Members are kept informed on the findings of the first year of HMO licensing.

31. Empty Property Report

Members received a report which provided an update on the work of the Housing and Community Safety department in relation to the recent rise in number of empty properties in the private sector. The report advised how the department intend to address this concern, in the short term.

Ruth Abbot, Housing Standards was in attendance to respond to questions.

The following information was provided in response to questions from committee members:

- The data on empty properties comes from the Council Tax service returns.
- The council's housing service had been given some funding to do a data cleansing exercise.
- The empty properties that the council are aware of are scattered and are not concentrated within one ward.
- Over the next 6 months officers would undertake inspections to see if these properties were truly empty. Officer's anticipate that approximately half of these are occupied.
- Where there are difficulties in access officers leave a card to encourage the occupier to get in touch.
- A report on the findings and options in relation to this concern, is due to be received at Executive towards the end of March.
- If a property had been empty for a number of years the council could compulsory purchase the property. This is a lengthy process involving legal services. The council has

information on who the owners are but do not necessarily know where there are.

- The council tax premium means that those with empty properties are charged double the cost of their regular council tax payment. Officers could not confirm whether this was being paid or whether its existence was causing properties to come back into use and advised that David Walker, Head of Customer & Exchequer Services or Paul Sanderson, Income Manager could confirm this.

Members advised that they would consider the report to be received at Executive in March next year and may invite officers back to this committee for further consideration of this matter.

Resolved: That Members noted the report.

Reason: To comply with the City of York Council's scrutiny processes and procedures.

32. Scoping Report on Corporate Review of Poverty in York

Members considered a scoping report on a topic referred by the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) to undertake a review into elements of poverty in the city which fall within this committee's remit, as part of a corporate review of poverty in York.

It had been suggested that the elements that fall into the remit of this committee were housing poverty including affordable housing on new developments. Members gave consideration as to whether there were other areas of poverty under the remit of this committee in which they wished to explore.

It was noted that other scrutiny committees would be focusing specifically on food and fuel poverty but that there would be some cross over in so far as housing would be a key determinate in relation to poverty.

A member suggested that the committee look at crime rates and how that relates to poverty and victims of crime and how perpetrators could be manipulated into crime in relation to poverty. The chair suggested that this would probably come from a different paper touched on in the County Lines discussion at this committee at the end of October 2019. It was agreed that the scrutiny officer would contact Jane Moet to provide a literature review on community safety and poverty.

It was agreed that initially the committee would look at all housing options: social and private rental, shared ownership schemes or any other housing schemes available to consider what the options were and whether or not they were having the intended impact. As well as considering mortgage affordability.

Next steps:

- The chair and the scrutiny officer to liaise with Tom Brittan, Assistant Director Housing and Community Safety to gain information on all housing options available.
- The committee to decide on which aspects that they will consider and notify the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee.
- Then establish a working group to work on that. Realistically this area of work would take a year.

Resolved: That the scrutiny officer send an email to the Assistant Director Housing and Community Safety requesting information on the various housing options for residents in York as outlined above, copying in the new scrutiny officer, the chair and vice chair.

Reason: To continue scoping this area of work.

33. Work Plan

The following were agreed as alterations and/or additions to the Work Plan for 2019/20.

23 December

- (i) Scoping report – Social rented housing on new developments, a referral from the Area Planning sub – committee regarding prohibitive service charges.
 - the committee would be seeking volunteers for a working group in relation to this.
- (ii) Analysis of Housing Allocation Policy
 - This report would need to be primarily focused on council housing stock also on Yorkshire Home Choice.
 - Members requested further information on the services and policies that the City of York Council has in relation to domestic violence and housing. Women often have

to leave the family home. If a person leaves another area, do they become a priority when they come to York or is this the responsibility of the authority that they have left.

- (iii) Members requested an update on homelessness and the preparations for this winter. Report to include information on 'on the ground' provision and the views of charities that work on this aspect such as the Salvation Army. To include a brief update on James House.
- (iv) A response in relation to the housing poverty scrutiny review.

The scrutiny officer suggested that it would be a good idea to go through the work plan and add a bullet point or two to give the report author a steer on why this committee had requested that item and what the committee would like the report to cover.

Cllr Fenton, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.20 pm].