

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Thursday 26 March 2015 at 2.00 pm

**To be held at the Town Hall, Pinstone
Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH**

The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend

Membership

Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Steve Ayris (Deputy Chair), David Barker, Simon Clement-Jones, Sheila Constance, Richard Crowther, George Lindars-Hammond, Roy Munn, Josie Paszek, Sioned-Mair Richards, Lynn Rooney, Richard Shaw and Sarah Jane Smalley

Substitute Members

In accordance with the Constitution, Substitute Members may be provided for the above Committee Members as and when required.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING

The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee exercises an overview and scrutiny function in respect of the planning, development and monitoring of performance and delivery of services which aim to make Sheffield a safer, stronger and more sustainable city for all of its residents.

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at www.sheffield.gov.uk. You can also see the reports to be discussed at the meeting if you call at the First Point Reception, Town Hall, Pinstone Street entrance. The Reception is open between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Thursday and between 9.00 am and 4.45 pm. on Friday. You may not be allowed to see some reports because they contain confidential information. These items are usually marked * on the agenda.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions or submit petitions to Scrutiny Committee meetings and recording is allowed under the direction of the Chair. Please see the website or contact Democratic Services for further information regarding public questions and petitions and details of the Council's protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings.

Scrutiny Committee meetings are normally open to the public but sometimes the Committee may have to discuss an item in private. If this happens, you will be asked to leave. Any private items are normally left until last. If you would like to attend the meeting please report to the First Point Reception desk where you will be directed to the meeting room.

If you require any further information about this Scrutiny Committee, please contact Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer, on 0114 2735065 or email matthew.borland@sheffield.gov.uk.

FACILITIES

There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall. Induction loop facilities are available in meeting rooms.

Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

**SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY AND POLICY
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA
26 MARCH 2015**

Order of Business

- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of Public and Press**
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public
- 4. Declarations of Interest**
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting**
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12th February, 2015.
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public
- 7. The Impact of Welfare Reform on Sheffield's Residents - Update March 2015**
Report of the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications.
- 8. Social Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract**
Report of the Interim Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Services.
- 9. Sheffield's Private Rented Sector**
Michelle Slater, Service Manager, Communities, to present.
- 10. Police and Crime Panel Update**
Councillor Roy Munn to report.
- 11. Written Responses to Public Questions**
Briefing note for information.
- 12. Progress on Implementation of the Allocations Policy**
Report of the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods
- 13. Review of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM)**
Briefing note for information.
- 14. Right to Buy Update Report**
Briefing note for information.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on a date to be arranged.

ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its executive or any committee of the executive, or of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee, or joint sub-committee of the authority, and you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI)** relating to any business that will be considered at the meeting, you must not:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the meeting, participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public.

You **must**:

- leave the room (in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct)
- make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any DPI at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- declare it to the meeting and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days, if the DPI is not already registered.

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your **disclosable pecuniary interests** under the new national rules. You have a pecuniary interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have a pecuniary interest.

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner undertakes.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period* in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

*The relevant period is the 12 months ending on the day when you tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests.

- Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority –
 - under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
 - which has not been fully discharged.

- Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.
- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) –
 - the landlord is your council or authority; and
 - the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -
 - (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and
 - (b) either -
 - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

If you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and you are aware that you have a **personal interest** in the matter which does not amount to a DPI, you must make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. You should leave the room if your continued presence is incompatible with the 7 Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership).

You have a personal interest where –

- a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in land and easements over land) of you or a member of your family or a person or an organisation with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the Authority's administrative area, or
- it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPIs but are in respect of a member of your family (other than a partner) or a person with whom you have a close association.

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously.

You should identify any potential interest you may have relating to business to be considered at the meeting. This will help you and anyone that you ask for advice to fully consider all the circumstances before deciding what action you should take.

In certain circumstances the Council may grant a **dispensation** to permit a Member to take part in the business of the Authority even if the member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest relating to that business.

To obtain a dispensation, you must write to the Monitoring Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting in question, explaining why a dispensation is sought and desirable, and specifying the period of time for which it is sought. The Monitoring Officer may consult with the Independent Person or the Council's Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance on 0114 2734018 or email gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk.

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Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 12 February 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Steve Ayris (Deputy Chair), David Barker, Simon Clement-Jones, Richard Crowther, George Lindars-Hammond, Roy Munn, Sioned-Mair Richards, Lynn Rooney, Richard Shaw and Sarah Jane Smalley

Also in attendance: Councillor Pat Midgley

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sheila Constance and Josie Paszek. An apology was also received from Jules Jones, who had been invited to attend as a representative of the Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee for Agenda Item 7 (Responding to Domestic and Sexual Abuse in Sheffield).

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 Councillors Steve Ayris and Sioned-Mair Richards each declared a Personal Interest in relation to Agenda Item 8 (Community Safety Update 2015) in that they were both members of the Sheffield Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership Board.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27th November 2014, were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 Responses to written public questions were provided as follows:-

- The Committee agreed that a written response would be provided to the question from Mr Martin Brighton regarding the removal of the item 'Questions from Members of the Public' from the agenda of Area Housing meetings.
- In response to a question from Mr Alan Kewley relating to the review of Local Area Partnerships, the Chair, Councillor Chris Weldon, indicated that the Lead Council Officer was Martin Hughes and confirmed that when the review had been completed the Cabinet Member and Lead Officer would be invited to the Committee to present a report on the outcome. The Policy and

Improvement Officer added that the Briefing Note placed before the last meeting of the Committee had indicated that the review would be presented to Cabinet this financial year, but he would check on progress and report back.

6. RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE IN SHEFFIELD

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Commissioning, Communities Portfolio, which described what was known of the prevalence of domestic and sexual abuse in Sheffield, set out the City's current response in relation to domestic and sexual abuse for adults and outlined recent developments and issues. The report was presented by Alison Higgins, Domestic Abuse Strategic Manager. Also present were Jo Daykin-Goodall, Director of Substance Misuse Strategy/Head of Drug and Alcohol/Domestic Abuse Co-ordination Team, and Councillor Pat Midgley, who had been invited for this item as a representative of the Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee.

6.2 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- There were lessons to be learnt from a recent case of domestic abuse which had included an element of coercive control. It had been noted that victims sometimes didn't choose the right agency to approach for help and there was a need to skill-up other agencies, so that victims could be appropriately directed.
- Every Domestic Homicide Review had an independent chair and received evidence from the affected family. The Review Board supervised its recommendations and the affected family were visited and asked about the review report. In relation to this most recent case, it appeared that attitudes had been changed within that particular community.
- Claire's Law was a disclosure scheme whereby people could find out about the previous record of any new partners. Information was available about this on the South Yorkshire Police website and there was a link from the Drug and Alcohol/Domestic Abuse Co-ordination Team (DACT) website. In addition the Police had given briefings to appropriate agencies in this regard.
- Domestic Violence Prevention Orders were now being implemented.
- The Claire's Law process took a few days to complete and information would be circulated to Committee Members on this.
- Officers were aware of situations in local communities whereby women were afraid to speak out about domestic abuse because of a fear of having their children taken into care.
- The recent Domestic Homicide Review had recommended actions to raise awareness and up-skilling in the voluntary sector, but the lack of resources

was a limiting factor.

- In relation to prevention, a helpline was available which led people to the right service and work had been undertaken to cut down the length of time that this would take. There was, however, more investment needed in early intervention and advice.
- There were ongoing discussions as to what success would look like with regard to intervention and consideration was being given to involving the Public Health Team in this.
- The Domestic Abuse Helpline was open from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm and it was intended that this would become a 24 hour service.
- In relation to support for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender relationships, officers had worked with the Broken Rainbow organisation and there had been a presence at Pride events. Specific references were also included on the DACT website. It was felt that there were still some barriers in coming forward, but that the situation was improving.

6.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Jo Daykin-Goodall and Alison Higgins for their contribution to the meeting; and
- (b) notes the contents of the report and responses to questions.

7. COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE 2015

7.1 Maxine Stavrianakos, Head of Neighbourhood Intervention and Tenancy Support, gave a presentation which updated the Committee on community safety issues. This included information on the Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Police and Crime Panels, the Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment (JSIA), Partnership Plan Priorities 2014/15, performance, achievements, challenges, the budget, and the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Police Act 2014. In addition, the Committee received a report of the Interim Director of Council Housing, which provided a progress report on the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM).

7.2 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- There were links between the community remedy process and restorative justice, but there had only been one case in Sheffield regarding community remedy and this had not gone through the process yet. As such, it was difficult to comment on the effectiveness of the process.
- There had been some training of staff in relation to Community Protection Notices and there was a growing awareness of their use.

- Consideration was being given to the setting up of a combined Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety Unit, which would have a multi-tenure approach and would look at how people were supported through diversionary activities. There were, however, resource issues.
- It was hoped to balance the support given to individuals, in relation to anti-social behaviour issues, who were in Council housing with that given to those in private accommodation. The Housing Revenue Account funded tenant support, whilst general funding financed support in the private sector. It was always possible to take actions against Council tenants as against the private sector, but this needed to be equalised.
- The proposed combined Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety Unit would include two Police Officers.
- All information on the use of drugs would be fed into the appropriate unit, so that the causes of such use could be analysed.
- Funding had been made available for the Dark Nights operation in Darnall and there had also been previous prevention work.
- Procedures in relation to the Community Trigger process were now in place.
- Maxine Stavrianakos would check on the scope of the Community Protection Notice and Civil Injunction procedures and report back.

7.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Maxine Stavrianakos for her contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the presentation and the report on the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting and the responses to questions; and
- (c) requests that:-
 - (i) consideration be given to the holding of a training session for Councillors on community safety, which could take the form of a surgery approach;
 - (ii) the presentation be reproduced in the form of a briefing paper to be circulated to all Councillors and included in the New Councillors' Induction Pack; and
 - (iii) the updates on progress on the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting be continued to run alongside the annual presentation to the Committee.

8. POLICE AND CRIME PANEL UPDATE

8.1 Councillor Roy Munn, who was a member of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel, circulated a briefing paper on the Local Policing Model, together with an accompanying letter, and reported on the Police and Crime Panel meeting which was held on 30th January 2015. At that meeting, Councillor Alex Sangster was appointed as Vice-Chair and an increase of 1.9% in the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Council Tax Precept for 2015/16 was approved. There had also been some discussion on the Local Policing Model and how the financial pressures in relation to this would be managed. Councillor Munn went on to explain that the Response Policing teams and the Safer Neighbourhood Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers would now all combine under the new model to provide local policing teams. He also emphasised the commitment to Police and Community Support Officers, which was outlined in the circulated letter, whilst the circulated briefing paper described how policing worked in South Yorkshire. The next meeting of the Panel would be held on 19th March 2015.

8.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Councillor Roy Munn for his contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the briefing paper on the Local Policing Model, together with the accompanying letter, and the information reported; and
- (c) requests that the briefing paper on the Local Policing Model be circulated to all Councillors.

9. WRITTEN RESPONSES TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

9.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Written Responses to Previous Public Questions report.

10. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

10.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer which provided details of the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

10.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) approves the Work Programme 2014/15 as detailed in the report subject to:-
 - (i) the Housing+ Walkabout taking place during the Summer; and
 - (ii) the inclusion of an item on the Private Housing Sector, with particular reference to selective licensing, as an agenda item for the Committee's March meeting; and
- (b) requests that any tenants wishing to raise any general issues regarding the

Social Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract (Kier Contract), at the Committee's March meeting, should notify the Policy and Improvement Officer of these prior to the meeting.

11. RIGHT TO BUY UPDATE REPORT

11.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes:-

- (a) the contents of the Right to Buy Update report; and
- (b) that, in the event of a trend of rapid increases in Right to Buy sales being identified, an appropriate Council officer would be invited to attend a Committee meeting to provide an explanation.

12. WELFARE REFORM - JANUARY 2015 UPDATE

12.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the Welfare Reform January 2015 Update report; and
- (b) requests that the table contained in the report be circulated to all Councillors.

13. LAND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

13.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the Land Management Arrangements Within the Housing Revenue Account report; and
- (b) requests the Policy and Improvement Officer to check as to whether any further information was available on the progress of the project, with particular reference to a completion date.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 26th March 2015, at 2.00 pm, in the Town Hall.



**Report to Safer and Stronger
Communities Scrutiny & Policy
Development Committee
26 March 2015**

Report of: Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

Subject: The impact of welfare reform on Sheffield's residents –
update March 2015

Author of Report: Nicola Rees, Policy and Improvement Officer
0114 27 34529
nicola.rees@sheffield.gov.uk

Summary:

Since July 2013 the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee has been receiving regular reports regarding the impact of welfare reform and how the Council and others are responding. This report provides the update for March 2015.

Type of item:

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	X

The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee is asked to:

- i. note the contents of the report and the progress made on understanding the impact of welfare reform on Sheffield's residents;
 - ii. provide views or comments on the Council's approach in responding to the welfare reform agenda; and
 - iii. give consideration to the future information the Committee wishes to receive on welfare reform. In light of the fact that changes implemented in 2013 have now become 'business as usual' for the Council, it is recommended that future reports focus on new developments, including the two benefits changes which are due to gather significant momentum in Sheffield over the next 12 months – Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments.
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Background Papers:

- The impact of welfare reform on Sheffield's residents – update January 2014, Report to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee, Nicola Rees, January 2014
- The impact of welfare reform on communities and households in Sheffield, Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, November 2014
- The impact of welfare reform on Sheffield's residents – update July 2014, Report to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee, Nicola Rees, July 2014
- Independent review of the operation of Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions validated by the Jobseekers Act 2013, Matthew Oakley, July 2014
- Touchbase, February 2015, Department for Work and Pensions
- Food for thought, an insight into why young people in England access foodbanks, YMCA, November 2014
- Below the breadline, the relentless rise of food poverty in Britain, Niall Cooper, Sarah Purcell and Ruth Jackson, June 2014
- Emergency use only: understanding and reducing the use of food banks in the UK, Jane Perry, Martin Williams, Tom Sefton, Moussa Haddad, November 2014

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At the present time the UK is seeing the biggest change to the benefits system in 60 years. Several of the most significant changes were introduced on 1 April 2013.
- 1.2 Since July 2013 the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee has been receiving regular reports regarding the impact of welfare reform and how the Council and others are responding. This report provides the update for March 2015.
- 1.3 As a reminder, the welfare reform report of 30 January 2014 provides a summary of the key changes to the benefits system and their timescales for implementation. That report can be found on the [Council's website](#)¹.
- 1.4 This report covers the following areas:
- Section 2 **Latest information**
Under-Occupancy ('Bedroom Tax')
Council Tax Support
Household Benefit Cap
Universal Credit
Personal Independent Payment
 - Section 3 **Understanding how people are being affected by welfare reform**
The experience of the advice sector
DWP response to research on benefit sanctions
The cumulative impact of welfare reform in Sheffield
The health and wellbeing consequences of welfare reform
Correlation between sanctions and food bank usage
 - Section 4 **Update on hardship schemes**
Council Tax Hardship Scheme
Discretionary Housing Payments
Local Assistance Scheme
Housing and Neighbourhood Service Hardship Fund
Business case for combining discretionary schemes
 - Section 5 **Conclusions**
 - Section 6 **Recommendations**

2 Latest Information

2.1.1 Under-occupancy ('Bedroom Tax')

In April 2013 the Government reduced the amount of Housing Benefit (HB) for working age Council or Housing Association tenants living in homes that are classed as too big for them. Tenants deemed to have one bedroom too many have lost 14% or more of their HB. Tenants deemed to have two or more bedrooms too many have lost 25% or more of their HB.

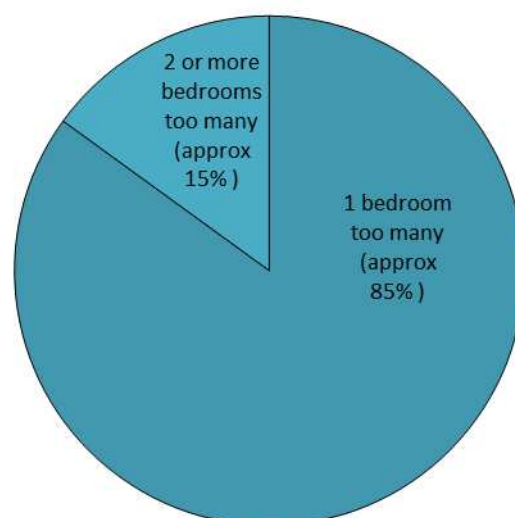
2.1.2 The number of people affected by Under-occupancy is continually fluctuating, due to tenants' ongoing changing circumstances. Therefore, while the information provided below offers some insight into the impact of Under-occupancy on Sheffield residents, it should be noted that this is a moving picture.

2.1.3 At the end of February 2015 there were 3878 council tenants affected by Under-occupancy. This compares to 5130 council tenants who were affected by Under-occupancy when it was first introduced in April 2013. A breakdown of Under-occupancy by ward is provided in Appendix A.

Of those:

- approximately 85% were assessed as having 1 bedroom 'too many', losing an average of £10.84 per week; and
- approximately 15% were assessed as having 2 or more bedrooms 'too many', losing an average of £21.02 per week.

Under-occupancy: Government assessment of number of bedrooms 'too many' (of 3878 council tenants)



2.1.4 Of the 3878 tenants affected by Under-occupancy, at the end of February 2015:

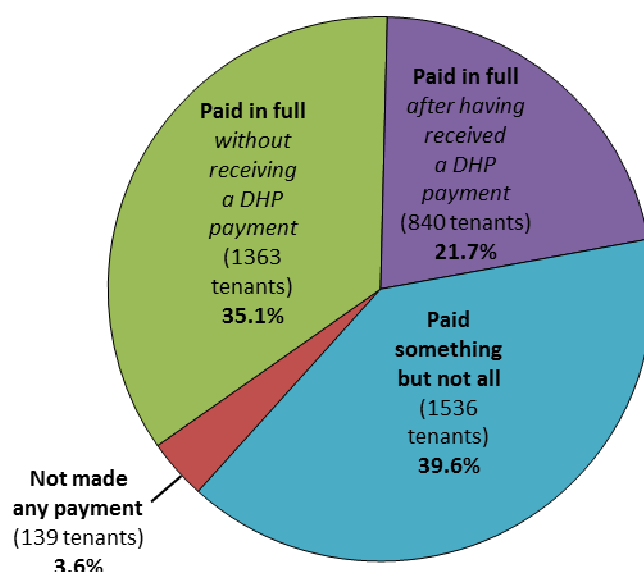
- 139 (3.6%) had not made any payment towards the Under-occupancy cut in their benefit;
- 2203 (56.8%) had paid in full; and
- 1536 (39.6%) had paid something but not all.

2.1.5 Of those tenants who had paid the full amount of the Under-occupancy cut in their benefit, 840 had received a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). Therefore, of the 3878 tenants affected by Under-occupancy, only 1363 (35.1%) had paid in full towards the Under-occupancy cut in their benefit *without receiving a DHP*.

2.1.6 The DHP scheme is in place to help with housing costs. In order to be eligible, applicants must already be in receipt of Housing Benefit. The amount of DHP awarded depends on individual circumstances and applicants must be able to demonstrate that they are suffering from severe financial hardship due to a shortfall in their benefits. When considering DHP applications support is prioritised for those who are least able to improve their financial situation.

2.1.7 In some cases the amount of DHP awarded to council tenants will have made up for the full amount of the Under-occupancy cut in their benefit; in other cases it will not. It should be noted that a DHP award is intended as a short-term measure to alleviate poverty or difficult circumstances and is not designed to be relied upon in the long term. Information on DHP spend is provided in section 4 of this report.

Payment towards under-occupancy cut in benefit



2.1.8 Since April 2014, 137 Sheffield council tenants have been awarded a rehousing priority to move to a smaller property. If tenants are not actively bidding the priority can be cancelled after 6 months but can be reinstated if the tenant then starts bidding.

2.1.9 Of the tenants awarded a priority:

- 108 tenants have stated this is due to the impact of welfare reform;
- 77 tenants have had agreement to move, despite them having rent arrears that would normally have stopped them from being rehoused;
- 84 tenants have been re-housed into smaller council properties; and
- 8 tenants have been re-housed into smaller Housing Association properties.

2.2.1 **Impact on rent arrears**

For council tenants in Sheffield, the potential impact on rent arrears caused by all the changes is currently estimated to be an increase from £10.4 million at the end of 13/14 to £29.2 million by 2019/20.

2.2.2 Recent information from the limited roll out of Universal Credit in the North West of England supports this analysis. This analysis will be tested on a regular basis as more information is released by the DWP and other information becomes available.

2.2.3 Rent arrears of Sheffield council tenants at the end of 2013/14 compared favorably with local benchmarking partners, ranking first amongst Northern benchmarking partners. Of the benchmarking organisations providing performance data for the end of 2013/14, Sheffield showed the highest percentage of current arrears rent collected.

2.2.4 Performance through 2014/15 has remained positive, as current arrears levels remain below projected targets. At the end of Quarter 3 current arrears were £5,223,268, against a profiled target of £5,534,290.

2.2.5 The impact on rent arrears from Under-occupation has remained high during 2014/15. However, the Housing and Neighbourhood Service has taken every opportunity to help tenants claim Discretionary Housing Payments. These payments have offset arrears and minimised the impact.

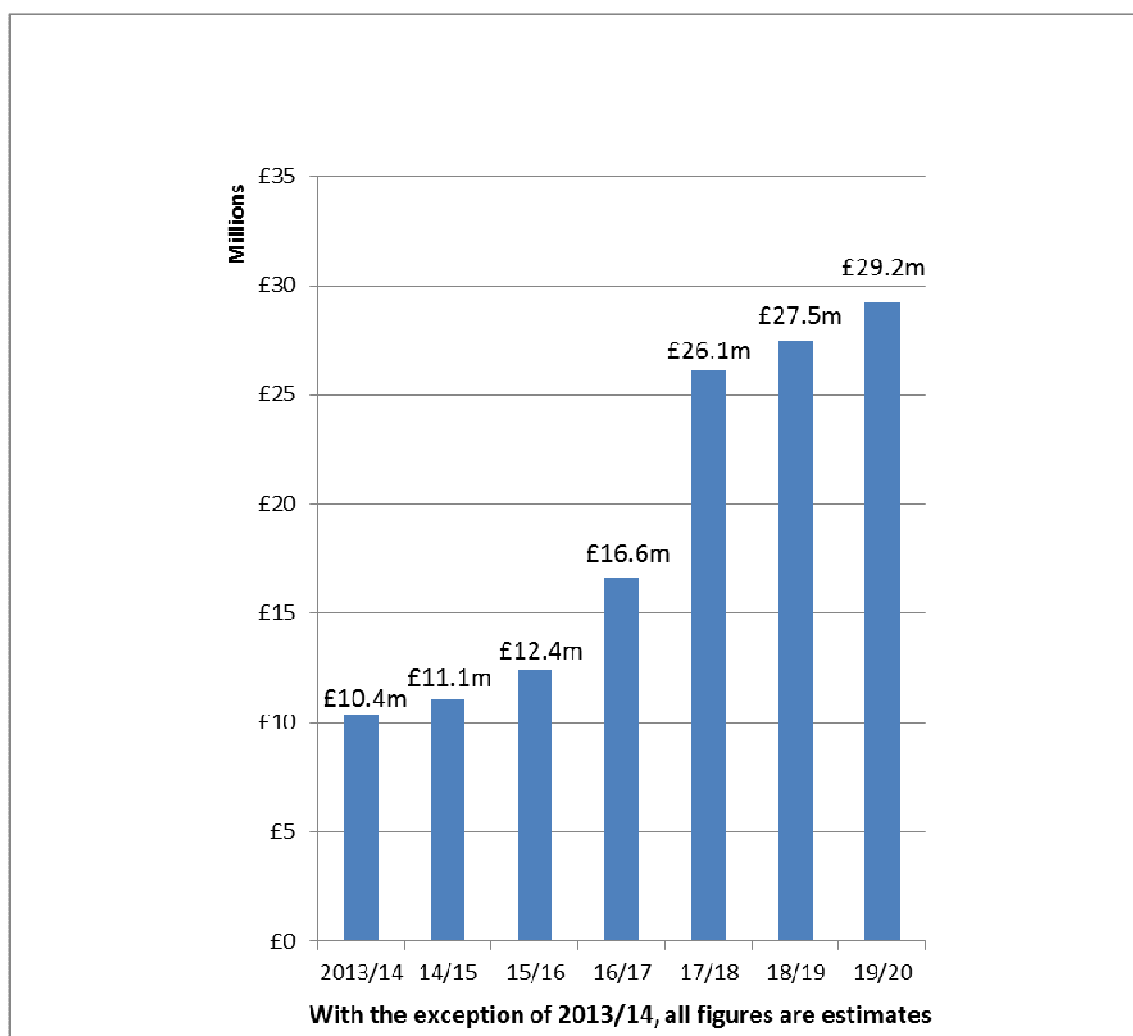
2.2.6 Housing and Neighbourhood Service has found tenants' ability to pay their rent has declined as the welfare reform agenda takes hold. In particular Housing and Neighbourhood Service staff who are dealing with rent arrears cases consider the following issues to present significant financial challenges for council tenants:

- changes to benefits, including the Under-occupancy charge and the Council Tax Support Scheme;
- the current economic climate, which for this customer group remains very difficult;

- the volume of tenants who are in work and are on zero-hours contracts; and
- sanctions being applied to tenants on benefits.

2.2.7 The need to provide greater advice to tenants who are currently claiming housing benefits and more support on all aspects of financial capability is contributing to an increased workload for Housing and Neighbourhood Service staff.

Estimated impact of welfare reform on rent arrears



2.3.1 Housing and Neighbourhood Service response to welfare reform

In response to the welfare reform agenda, the Housing and Neighbourhood Service has undertaken a great deal of activity.

2.3.2 In 2013 the Housing and Neighbourhood Service recruited additional staff to manage the impact of Under-occupation. This team was initially engaged in visiting tenants and it has carried out over 10,000 attempted visits to tenants affected by Under-occupancy or the Household Benefit Cap. The team has successfully gained contact with over 3800 tenants.

2.3.3 Those tenants who are familiar with Under-occupancy are now directed to surgeries which take place in local housing offices and local First Points. Tenants can make a prearranged appointment or just drop in to obtain advice and support on benefits changes. To date over 1300 tenants have accessed this service, and this is ensuring that the Housing and Neighbourhood Service works more effectively and sees more tenants.

2.3.4 Housing Officers are still carrying out home visits to vulnerable tenants and those who are unable to attend surgeries.

2.3.5 To date 45 tenants have been provided with Sheffield Credit Union Budgeting Accounts (SCUBAs). These are a tool to assist tenants who struggle to budget effectively and the accounts help tenants to pay their rent and other creditors on time. These 45 tenants would otherwise have had difficulty making regular rent payments and were at risk of falling into debt.

2.3.6 Work will continue to progress cases where tenants have requested to downsize. A £20,000 fund has been identified to provide a "man & van" service to help tenants physically move if they are downsizing and suffering hardship. This fund is being used in conjunction with the Supported Housing service to ensure efficiencies and value for money, as this service already operates a homemaker service.

2.3.7 The Housing and Neighbourhood Service has been working with the voluntary sector to support council tenants who need personal budgeting support and support with digital inclusion since 2013. These are both essential elements of support as part of the future roll out of Universal Credit.

2.3.8 The Housing and Neighbourhood Service was involved in a Big Lottery funded project which involved providing financial support to tenants. Through this project tenants who are in need of personal budgeting support can be referred to the 'Improving Financial Capability' service. This one-to-one service helps tenants to better manage their finances.

2.3.9 The Housing and Neighbourhood Service has also worked closely with Heeley Development Trust, referring tenants to the 'Sheffield Online Project'. This project delivers free, accessible IT sessions across Sheffield, teaching local people how to use IT and how to access the internet.

2.3.10 When the Benefit Cap was first introduced, officers from the Housing and Neighbourhood Service were involved in a programme of joint visits to affected households, with colleagues from Job Centre Plus. The Housing and Neighbourhood Service regularly receives updates about households who are affected by the Benefit Cap. Officers are then able to identify newly capped cases from the information provided, and visit or make contact with council tenants to offer help and advice. This proactive work has ensured that tenants who are subject to the Benefit Cap have been able to sustain their tenancies.

2.4.1 Tenants in other social housing

There are approximately a further 2,000 tenants in Sheffield affected by Under-occupancy who are living in other social housing.

2.4.2 Housing Associations (HAs) in the city have done a lot of work in terms of profiling their households to see who needs extra support. Support has included stepping up debts and benefits advice work, supporting tenants to make DHP applications, as well as various policy and practical measures put in place to facilitate transfers and moving.

2.4.3 The Council continues to engage with Housing Associations through the Social Landlords Relationship Team. There is a regular discussion between the Council and HAs about welfare reform, which includes sharing information about impacts on tenants.

2.5.1 Council Tax Support

From April 2013 the Government replaced Council Tax Benefit with a local scheme of Council Tax Support (CTS) run by individual local authorities. The fund available to local authorities to provide the new scheme included a significant cut, when compared to the money available to provide Council Tax Benefit. As pensioners have been protected from the changes to Council Tax Benefit, working age taxpayers have been forced to share the burden of the reduction in funds available.

2.5.2 Since April 2013 working age Council Tax Support (CTS) customers in Sheffield have had to pay at least 23% of their Council Tax. At the end of February 2015 there were around 31,500 people of working age in Sheffield receiving CTS. This compares to around 33,000 working age customers who were in receipt of CTS at the end of February 2014.

2.5.3 A review of the Council Tax Support Scheme was undertaken during 2013/14, which resulted in a decision to continue with the original scheme of 23% during 2014/15. Furthermore the decision has now been taken to continue with the same CTS scheme for 2015/16

2.6.1 Council Tax arrears

At the end of February 2015 16,767 summonses had been issued to CTS customers since April 2014. At the same point in the last financial year (between April 2013 and the end of February 2014), there had been 19,836 summonses issued to CTS customers.

2.6.2 At the end of February 2015, the value of summonsed debt for CTS customers during 14/15 was £4.9m. At the same point in the last financial year (at the end of February 2014) the summonsed debt during 13/14 was £5.3m.

2.6.3 The Council remains committed to doing everything in its power to recover arrears that are owed. In doing so the Council will continue to adopt a firm but fair approach to recovery, taking robust action against those who simply refuse to pay, whilst taking a more sympathetic approach to those who are genuinely struggling to pay. In practice this means that realistic repayment arrangements will be made with those who are struggling to pay and this may mean that the debt is not always cleared at the end of the financial year.

2.6.4 However, in doing this, the Council must follow the collection and recovery rules as set by Central Government, and the Council is unable to introduce alternative processes for collection or recovery outside of those established in law.

2.6.5 Following the issuing of a summons, the Council will seek a Liability Order from the Court. Once a Liability Order is obtained, the Council can then take further recovery action if non-payment persists. The actions the Council can take include:

- deducting money from benefits;
- deducting money from earnings;
- instructing an External Collection Agency (bailiff) to collect the debt;
- placing a Charging Order on property owned by the taxpayer;
- issuing Bankruptcy proceedings; and
- committal to prison.

2.6.6 The Council pursues all of these actions, to a greater or lesser extent, in order to recover sums owed. The action taken will depend on the individual circumstances of the debtor and actions such as committal to prison, issuing bankruptcy proceedings and obtaining charging orders are taken where the Council feels that there is no alternative.

2.7.1 **Household Benefit Cap**

From August 2013 a cap began to be introduced on the total amount of benefit a single person or family can receive. This benefit change affects the working age population only. The cap is £500 a week for a family, and £350 a week for a single person. The Household Benefit Cap does not apply where the claimant, their partner or any children receive some specific benefits, including disability benefits.

2.7.2 The Benefit Cap has initially been applied to a customer's Housing Benefit (HB). Once this has taken place, if the income of the household is still above the level of the cap (£500 per week for a family, £350 per week for a single person) the customer will continue to receive the "excess" income until they migrate to Universal Credit, at which point the income will reduce to the level of the cap.

2.7.3 There are currently 123 households in Sheffield who are affected by the Benefit Cap. This is a reduction from 170 households in January 2014.

2.7.4 The average reduction in Housing Benefit is £45.74 per week, with the highest reduction being £145.38 per week, and the lowest £0.35. The total annual loss in Housing Benefit in Sheffield is £292,544.71.

2.7.5 There are approximately 640 children currently living in households which are affected by the Benefit Cap.

2.8.1 **Universal Credit**

Universal Credit (UC) is a new benefit which will affect all people of working age who are currently receiving any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based JSA
- income-related ESA
- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit

2.8.2 These benefits will be replaced by one single monthly payment which will be paid in arrears, to a single person in each household.

2.8.3 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) began the national expansion of Universal Credit to remaining areas across the UK in February 2015. This followed the roll out of some aspects of Universal Credit in the north-west of England during 2014.

2.8.4 DWP announced in February 2015 that Sheffield would be included in tranche four of the national roll out. This means that UC will begin to be introduced in Sheffield between December 2015 and April 2016. At this time UC will roll out only to new claims from single people, who would otherwise have been eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance, including those with existing Housing Benefit and Working Tax Credit claims.

- 2.8.5 An initial meeting has been set up between the Housing and Neighbourhood Service, Customer Services, the Revenues and Benefits Service and the Department for Work and Pensions to look at plans for the roll out. This will take place at the end of March 2015.
- 2.8.6 Moving to UC is designed to simplify the working age benefits system, and is not intended to reduce the overall amount of benefit paid (although cuts either have been or will be applied to many of the benefits that will make up UC).
- 2.8.7 However, UC is likely to cause difficulties for some residents, who will need to make arrangements to pay their own housing costs, where previously these payments would have been paid directly to their landlord. Universal Credit also includes moving towards online claiming of the benefit, which will have significant implications for many households who do not currently have access to the internet.
- 2.8.8 The Council has particular concerns about the ability of vulnerable people, for example those with learning disabilities and mental health issues, to transition successfully to UC.
- 2.8.9 The Council's Universal Credit Project Group is leading the Council's activity to enable the Council and its customers to prepare for the introduction of UC. This Group is now chaired by Maxine Stavrianakos, Head of Neighbourhood Intervention & Tenant Support.
- 2.8.10 Partnership working is taking place between the Department for Work and Pensions and Sheffield City Council's Housing and Neighbourhood Service, Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits Service to provide staff across both organisations with an increased awareness of the work of other teams in supporting customers who will receive Universal Credit.
- 2.8.11 Work is also taking place to scope the opportunities for a joined up service at local Job Centre Plus offices, which would provide advice on benefits, welfare reforms and looking for employment.
- 2.8.12 The Council is building relationships with other social landlords who are in earlier phases of UC roll out than Sheffield. This will enable Sheffield to learn from the experience of other authorities and develop action plans. Specifically, the Housing and Neighbourhood Service is meeting with other housing services across South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire. Two local authorities within these geographical areas - Chesterfield Borough Council and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council - will be going live with UC in tranche one (February 2015 - April 2015).
- 2.8.13 The UC Project Group will also co-ordinate the Council's communications activity on Universal Credit. The Housing and Neighbourhood Service has already started to get messages out about UC to council tenants through a variety of media. This has focussed on encouraging tenants to find out how they can help themselves and access support. Recently

flyers have been sent to 40,000 council tenants (at low cost, enclosed with an existing mail out) offering information, advice and support on:

- digital inclusion/internet training via Heeley Development Trust;
- Sheffield Credit Union (SCU) and SCU budgeting accounts;
- welfare reform;
- the Illegal Money Lending Team; and
- downsizing open days.

2.8.14 The UC Project Group is seeking early learning opportunities from colleagues in other local authorities, in order to develop a communications plan which will raise awareness and understanding of Universal Credit amongst tenants across tenures, including private sector tenants.

2.9.1 **Personal Independence Payment**

A new benefit, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), was introduced in Sheffield in June 2013. All new claims from 16-64 year olds, which would previously have been for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) are now for PIP.

2.9.2 Replacement of DLA by PIP includes more stringent and more frequent medical tests. The budget has been cut nationally by just over £1bn per year (a 20% budget cut) and the focus of PIP is to be on people with the most severe disabilities. It will therefore be harder to qualify for PIP than it would have been to qualify for DLA.

2.9.3 In February 2015 DWP started inviting the following current DLA recipients in Sheffield to claim PIP:

- those with fixed period DLA awards;
- young people turning 16;
- those where there is a report of a change in the DLA claimant's health condition or disability; and
- existing DLA claimants aged 16-64 who wish to make a PIP claim.

2.9.4 From October 2015, all the remaining claimants in receipt of a DLA award will be invited to make a claim for PIP. DWP will randomly select DLA claimants in receipt of an indefinite award or a fixed term award, and notify them about what they need to do to claim PIP. DWP will invite claims as early as possible from recipients who have turned 65 after 8 April 2013. It is the Government's intention that by late 2017 all existing DLA claimants will have been invited to claim PIP.

2.9.5 It is estimated that 9000 households in Sheffield will be affected by these changes and it is estimated that the financial loss to Sheffield resulting from these changes will be £14m per yearⁱⁱ.

2.9.6 Work is continuing within the Council to prepare for the migration of existing DLA claimants to PIP, including trying to understand the potential impacts on the Council's own budgets. We anticipate that as people

move from DLA to PIP, the higher access thresholds for PIP may result in increased demand for social care services.

- 2.9.7 Sheffield Citizens Advice (SCA) reports that PIP has resulted in significant administrative delays for claimants in Sheffield. SCA reports that first time claimants of PIP in Sheffield have typically had to wait 7-13 months to have their claims determined (approximately 2-4 times longer than under the DLA system).
- 2.9.8 SCA reports that analysis of enquiries between October 2013 and October 2014 (from 1260 unique clients) shows administrative bottlenecks at several points in the system, including:
- delays in setting up medical assessments that have been outsourced to ATOS Healthcare in Sheffield, with these assessments taking 3-6 months, instead of 6 weeks;
 - poor availability of assessment venues – there are only two venues in Sheffield and some people have been required to travel outside the city or face further delays; and
 - further delays where people with deteriorating conditions need to request enhanced awards.

3 Understanding how people in Sheffield are being affected by welfare reform

3.1.1 The experience of the advice sector

The advice sector continues to be significantly affected by the welfare reform programme. Demand for services remains intense. In the first year of operation - October 2013 to September 2014 - Sheffield Citizens Advice (SCA) dealt with 20,000 unique clients. In the quarter October to December 2014 there was a 15% increase in clients on the same quarter in the previous year.

3.1.2 75% of issues dealt with by SCA are benefit or debt related; continuing themes are the disproportionate difficulties experienced by vulnerable people, including people with people with physical and learning disabilities and those with long term health problems, including mental illness.

3.1.3 The advice sector continues to make regular referrals to food banks to support clients' immediate needs, often as a result of sanctions or benefit delays.

3.1.4 SCA report continuing problems with JSA and ESA Sanctions, as outlined in the previous Scrutiny report. SCA will continue to monitor and contribute to further research on this issue.

3.1.5 SCA report that increased restrictions on benefits claims from EU Migrant workers is leading to hardship for some people; this is a new aspect of welfare reform. SCA states that it is now being contacted regularly by people who have settled in the country and have been in employment for several years, before a change of circumstances e.g. accident or illness

leaves them needing welfare support. SCA report that the new rules are complex to understand and inconsistently applied by the DWP, leaving some families in severe hardship.

3.2.1 **Department for Work and Pensions commissioned research on benefit sanctions – update on improvements since the review**

The previous report on welfare reform which was considered by the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee in July 2014 included informationⁱⁱⁱ about the [‘Independent review of the operation of Jobseeker’s Allowance sanctions validated by the Jobseekers Act 2013’](#)^{iv}, which was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions and published on 22 July 2014.

3.2.2 The independent review which was carried out by Matthew Oakley, considered benefit sanctions for claimants of Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) who had been sanctioned after being referred to a mandatory back to work scheme. The review was tasked with assessing and making recommendations around how the process of benefit sanctions functions in these circumstances, and how well claimants understand the system.

3.2.3 The report, which revealed serious flaws in how sanctions were imposed, made 17 recommendations for reform.

3.2.4 DWP accepted all the recommendations and reports that it [has made some improvements since the review](#)^v, including:

- Regularly speaking to claimants and stakeholders to understand their experiences of sanctions;
- Engaging with claimants from day one, through the claimant interview and the Claimant Commitment, which informs them about sanctions;
- Making sanctions information more accessible. DWP has worked with claimants and stakeholders to develop a clear English guide to JSA sanctions which is available at [GOV.UK](#)^{vi};
- Testing options to provide easily accessible, preventative messages for claimants, for example using online videos;
- Developing an ‘Easy Read’ communications guide to sanctions and the Claimant Commitment in partnership with Mencap;
- Exploring how to encourage more people to open important letters;
- Looking at the possibility of using other communications channels such as email;
- Improving the content and design of communications to claimants to make them more engaging and motivating. A number of Universal Credit letters have already been re-designed and JSA letters are now being reviewed.

3.3.1 **The cumulative impact of welfare reform in Sheffield**

A report documenting [The Impact of Welfare Reform on Communities and Households in Sheffield](#)^{vii} was commissioned by Sheffield City Council and was published by Sheffield Hallam University in November 2014.

3.3.2 The report documents the numbers of affected households and the financial losses down to the level of electoral wards. It also quantifies the financial impact on different types of household across the city, including at ward level.

3.3.3 The estimates by ward deploy established methods, however, the estimates by type of household are entirely new. This is the first time in the context of any UK city or district that reliable and comprehensive figures have been available on the impact of welfare reform on specific groups of local residents.

3.3.4 The research shows that in Sheffield:

- some communities will see five times the level of reductions from welfare reform than others;
- just under half of the financial loss from welfare reform - around £75m a year - will fall on working households;
- couples with children will lose an average of nearly £1,700 a year;
- lone parents will lose an average of over £2,000 a year; and
- adults with health problems or disabilities will be affected by welfare reform significantly more than the rest of the population.

3.3.5 Overall, it is estimated that the city will lose nearly £170m a year in benefits and tax credits when welfare reforms have come to full fruition^{viii}. This is equivalent to £460 a year for every adult of working age in the city.

3.3.6 The report shows that within Sheffield, some local communities will experience greater losses due to welfare reform than others. In the most affected ward – Firth Park – the average resident of working age can expect to lose five times as much as residents in the least affected ward in the city – Broomhill.

3.3.7 Households with dependent children, and especially lone parents, face some of the largest financial losses. They often lose out from reductions in tax credits, lower entitlement to housing benefit, changes to council tax benefit and below-inflation benefit increases, including child benefit.

3.3.8 Of the total of £169m a year that Sheffield is expected to lose when the reforms have come to full fruition, some £108m – approaching two-thirds – is a financial loss faced by households with dependent children.

3.3.9 Many adults with health problems or disabilities are likely to be significantly affected by more restrictive eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance (the new incapacity benefit) and Personal

Independence Payments (the replacement for Disability Living Allowance).

3.3.10 The financial loss in Sheffield arising from DLA and incapacity benefit reform is estimated to be £56m a year – a third of the total financial loss arising from welfare reform. A large part of these welfare cuts is still in the pipeline.

3.3.11 The research will be used to help inform the Council's understanding of how it should direct its services to support the people who are most negatively impacted by welfare reform. The report will inform the Council's key strategy documents. Key messages and learning from the research have already been used as the Corporate Plan 2015-18 and the Tackling Poverty Strategy have been developed.

3.3.12 The Council has shared the research widely with partners and organisations across Sheffield to help inform future city wide planning and work.

3.4.1 **The health and wellbeing consequences of welfare reform**

Information on the impact of welfare reform on community and individual health and wellbeing is being fed back through a number of services. Services working with families and individuals report concerns that changes in benefits, delays in payment of benefits and accompanying sanctions are having a detrimental impact on vulnerable families and exacerbating levels of poverty.

3.4.2 One pertinent indicator of this impact is the use of food banks in Sheffield. Although we don't have complete data on use of food banks across the city, it is possible to look at the use of individual food banks. One example is the increase in referrals to Mount Tabor food bank at Parson Cross. Demand for the food bank has risen and has seen numbers of households provided with food parcels increase by 70% from 2013. In 2014 the food bank helped 1186 people with food parcels, with 1 in 3 of those being children. Mount Tabor food bank reports that 66% of referrals are due to benefit sanctions, benefit delays and benefit changes.

3.4.3 Other workers such as Health Trainers and Advocacy Workers report that in the clients they see, there has been an increase mental illness, such as anxiety, stress and depression. This is due to worries about debt and finance and being able to cope with basic daily living expenses.

3.4.4 The Community Wellbeing Programme is trying to address the negative impact of welfare reform by building up individual and community resilience. This is being done in a number of ways, including through:

- practical skills - for example, courses on shopping and cooking on a budget;
- reducing social isolation through group activities and events; and
- building up skills and confidence in individuals so that they feel able to volunteer, go onto further education or look for employment.

3.5.1 Links between sanctions and food bank usage

In September 2014 Lord Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform wrote to the Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee. Within the letter he asserted that ‘there is no evidence of the correlation of sanctions to food banks’. The Scrutiny Chair has requested that this report includes an update on this.

3.5.2 Food banks, by their very nature, are not part of the official welfare system. They are usually run by voluntary organisations and they generally do not have extensive systems in place to record in detail data about volumes of use and clients etc. Additionally, for each client visiting a food bank, there may be a number of reasons why this visit is necessary. Therefore, accessing unequivocal statistics across all food banks to correlate the increasing use of sanctions to growing referrals to food banks is unlikely to be possible.

3.5.3 However, that being said, there are a number of well-respected organisations within the UK asserting that increasing reliance on food banks is firmly linked to the use of sanctions. These include, but are not limited to, Child Poverty Action Group, Church of England, Oxfam GB, The Trussell Trust, Church Action on Poverty and YMCA.

3.5.4 A research report produced by YMCA England, published in November 2014, [Food for Thought, An insight into why young people in England access foodbanks](#)^{ix}, states that:

Over three quarters (76%) of YMCAs referring young people to foodbanks indicated that there had been an increase in the past year in the number of individuals they had to refer, with 40% reporting that this increase had been significant... The new sanctions regime introduced in October 2012 was singled out as the main reason behind the growth in the numbers of young people living in food poverty.

3.5.5 To provide some context to the comments cited within the Food for Thought report, official DWP statistics^x show a disproportionate number of sanctions being given to young people, with young people accounting for 56% of those sanctioned from October 2012 to December 2013^{xi}.

3.5.6 The report [Below the headline, The Relentless Rise of Food Poverty in Britain](#)^{xii}, published by Church Action on Poverty, The Trussell Trust and Oxfam in June 2014 asserts that:

Of the Trussell Trust food banks surveyed in March and April 2014, 83 percent reported that sanctions to social security have caused more people to be referred to them for emergency food in the last year.

- 3.5.7 A report published by The Child Poverty Action Group, Church of England, Oxfam GB and The Trussell Trust, in November 2014, [Emergency Use Only: Understanding and reducing the use of food banks in the UK^{xiii}](#), states:

Difficulty in navigating the benefit system was a common feature of food bank users' experiences... of those food bank users for whom additional data were collected, 20-30% said that their household's benefits had recently been stopped or reduced because of a sanction. This varied between locations: 19% in Tower Hamlets, 23% in Epsom and Ewell, and 28% in County Durham.

4 Update on hardship schemes

- 4.1 The Council administers or runs three principal schemes to help people who are suffering from financial hardship. These are the Council Tax Hardship Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments and the Local Assistance Scheme. The Housing and Neighbourhood Service also runs a small hardship scheme for council tenants.

4.2.1 Council Tax Hardship Scheme

In 2013/14 the Council set up a £500,000 hardship fund for those who are struggling to pay their Council Tax, known as the Council Tax Hardship Scheme (CTHS).

- 4.2.2 In 2014/15 the allocated budget for CTHS was £500,000. Additionally it was agreed to carry over a £90,000 underspend from the allocated amount of CTHS from 2013/14. This £90,000 has been used during 2014/15 to pay cases with debt accrued during 2013/14.

- 4.2.3 At the end of February 2015 approximately 4200 CTHS awards had been made during 2014/15. The value of those awards was £578,023. These figures include awards made for debt accrued during 2013/14, as referred to above. Therefore the CTHS scheme for 2014/15 remains within budget.

- 4.2.4 The allocated budget for CTHS in 2015/16 is £600,000. This is due to be reviewed within the first few months of 15/16 to assess the impact of the 1.99% council tax increase on demand for the hardship scheme.

4.3.1 Discretionary Housing Payments

The Council is responsible for administering Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), which are used to support customers with housing costs. Many of these customers are those affected by a reduction in Housing Benefit as a result of the Under-occupancy rules.

- 4.3.2 At the end of February 2015 approximately 5400 DHP awards had been made during 2014/15. The value of those awards was £964,810.

4.3.3 The Government requires the Council to record the “impact” and “reason for” awarding a DHP and has set out monitoring criteria for both categories. In terms of the impact that has driven the need for a DHP, in 85% of cases this is due to Under-occupancy (the ‘Bedroom Tax’).

4.3.4 The Government has recently announced the amount of DHP grant that the Council will receive for 2015/16. This will be £958,791, which is £82,025 less than the Council received in 2014/15 and £267,011 less than the total amount the Council received in 2013/14 (in that year the Government made additional funding available during the year).

4.4.1 **Local Assistance Scheme**

Some discretionary elements of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Social Fund were abolished from April 2013, with the DWP providing funding for the Council to establish local assistance for financially disadvantaged people. Sheffield’s fund is known as the Local Assistance Scheme.

4.4.2 The total funding the Council received for the LAS fund for 2014/15 was £2,472,241.

4.4.3 Up to 31st January 2015 14,490 phone calls were answered by the dedicated LAS team.

4.4.4 Between 1 April 2014 and 28 February 2015, the Council received 5416 applications for assistance:

- 1603 applications were for loans, of which 588 (37%) were awarded; and
- 3813 applications were for grants, of which 1341 (35%) were awarded.

4.4.5 At the end of February 2015 the total amount awarded for loans was £44,690.44. The average loan award was £76.00.

4.4.6 At the end of February 2015 the total amount awarded for grants was £797,782.01. The average grant award was £594.92.

4.4.7 The loan funds continue to be recycled through an excellent recovery rate by Sheffield Credit Union. Repayments received during 2014/2015 were £36,914.62 at the end of February 2015.

4.4.8 During 2014/2015 the numbers of applications for loans has continued to be lower than comparative months in 2013/2014, and the number of applications for grants has continued to be higher than comparative months in 2013/2014.

4.4.9 There continues to be over 50% rejection of applications for both grants and loans, due to customers either not meeting the eligibility criteria or by already exceeding the number of applications within the period.

4.4.10 A breakdown of LAS applications by ward and information on the customer profile of LAS applicants are available in appendix B.

4.5.1 Loan award analysis

Local Assistance loans are to help people who do not have enough money to meet their short term needs because of an emergency or disaster.

4.5.2 Loans are generally awarded to cover day to day living expenses (food, groceries, nappies, money for pay as you go fuel meters), which replicates the items that would have been available through Social Fund Crisis Loans.

4.5.3 The largest loan expenditure in 2014/2015 is again for food provision, which is a continuing trend from 2013/2014.

4.6.1 Grant award analysis

Local Assistance grants are to support independent living in the community. They are generally awarded to help buy household items - including white goods (for example fridges, ovens and washing machines), essential cooking equipment, seating, carpets, curtains, beds and bedding - which replicates the items that would have been available through Social Fund Community Care Grants.

4.6.2 The largest grant expenditure in 2014/2015 is again for white goods, which is a continuing trend from 2013/2014.

4.7.1 2015/16 and beyond

The Welfare Support Grant ends at the end of the financial year 2014/15. This presents a significant challenge for funding for LAS for 2015/16 and beyond.

4.7.2 The decision has been made by members to continue funding the LAS for a further 12 months to March 2016, but with reduced funding of £1,500,000.

4.7.3 In 2016 a decision will need to be made on future provision for the needs that are met through the scheme. Work is being undertaken on the options, which include the scope to combine discretionary funds or work more effectively across the different funds and sources of support.

4.8.1 Housing and Neighbourhood Service Hardship Fund

In 2013/14 a £50,000 Hardship Fund was set up from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to support tenants affected by welfare reforms and suffering hardship.

4.8.2 In 2013/14, 134 payments were made, totaling £49,942, which will save the HRA an estimated £121,814 in costs for legal action, including eviction. There will be additional savings for other Council services due to stopping eviction for at least 37 of the tenants.

- 4.8.3 A further budget of £1m was identified from the HRA to support tenants from 2014/15 up to the end of 2017/18. The majority of this is expected to be used in 2016/17 and 2017/18, when council tenants will start to be affected by Universal Credit.
- 4.8.4 Of this additional funding, £147,000 has been awarded to council tenants between March 2014 and Feb 2015, saving the HRA an estimated £453,000.
- 4.9.1 **Business case to combine discretionary schemes**
The Council is considering options around combining its discretionary schemes and has been looking in detail at the current delivery of each scheme.
- 4.9.2 As well as looking at the scope to combine funds, the Council is also considering how, if the business case to combine schemes is not strong enough, the schemes could work more effectively together in the future (for customers and the Council). This includes sharing information, referral routes, consistency in assessments and efficiencies in how support could be provided.
- 4.9.3 The business case is currently being drafted and findings will be reported to CMT in April 2015.

Conclusions

- 5.1 Although the changes to the benefits system over the past few years have been substantial, many of the changes which were implemented in April 2013 – now almost two years ago – have moved into ‘business as usual’ for the Council. That is not to understate the significant impact that welfare reform has had and continues to have on thousands of people in Sheffield.
- 5.2 It has now been confirmed by the Department for Work and Pensions that two benefits changes will gather significant momentum in Sheffield over the next 12 months – Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments.
- 5.3 As this report demonstrates, work is ongoing within the Council, and with partners to understand the impact that welfare reform is having on Sheffield residents and to put measures in place to help local people to deal with the changes. The Council is committed to continuing this work.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee is asked to:

- i. note the contents of the report and the progress made on understanding the impact of welfare reform on Sheffield's residents;
- ii. provide views or comments on the Council's approach in responding to the welfare reform agenda; and
- iii. give consideration to the future information the Committee wishes to receive on welfare reform. In light of the fact that changes implemented in 2013 have now become 'business as usual' for the Council, it is recommended that future reports focus on new developments, including the two benefits changes which are due to gather significant momentum in Sheffield over the next 12 months – Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments.

ⁱ <http://sheffielddemocracy.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s11959/Welfare%20Reform%20Report.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/ourexpertise/impact-welfare-reform-sheffield>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://sheffielddemocracy.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s14574/Welfare%20Reform%20Scrutiny%20Report.pdf>

^{iv} https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335144/jsa-sanctions-independent-review.pdf

^v https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/405167/touchbase-feb-2015.pdf

^{vi} https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/379070/jobseekers-allowance-sanctions-dwpf15.pdf

^{vii} <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/ourexpertise/impact-welfare-reform-sheffield>

^{viii} The figures presented show the impact *when the reforms have come into full effect*. This is important because some of the reforms, particularly those affecting incapacity and disability benefits, are being implemented in stages over a number of years. In most cases, the figures show the expected impact in the 2014-15 financial year. The exceptions are the DLA reforms, which will not impact fully until 2017-18, and the wider application of means testing to ESA and the 1 per cent up-rating, both of which do not impact fully until 2015-16.

^{ix} <http://www.ymca.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Food-for-thought-Report.pdf>

^x This refers to Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance sanctions decisions made from October 2012 to December 2013

^{xi} [Below the breadline, The Relentless Rise of Food Poverty in Britain](#), Church Action on Poverty, The Trussell Trust, Oxfam, June 2014

^{xii} http://www.trusselltrust.org/resources/documents/foodbank/6323_Below_the_Breadline_web.pdf

^{xiii} <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/emergency-use-only-understanding-and-reducing-the-use-of-food-banks-in-the-uk-335731>

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The Impact of Welfare Reform on Sheffield's Residents – Update March 2015

Appendix A - Additional information on Under-occupancy

Breakdown of Under-occupancy by ward

Rank (highest to lowest)	Ward	Number of CHS ¹ properties being 'Under-occupied'	% of total CHS 'Under-occupied' properties
1	Firth Park	451	11.63%
2	Southey	412	10.62%
3	Arbourthorne	345	8.90%
4	Burngreave	342	8.82%
5	Beauchief & Greenhill	318	8.20%
6	Gleadless Valley	314	8.10%
7	Walkley	205	5.29%
8	Central	182	4.69%
9	Woodhouse	150	3.87%
10	Birley	134	3.46%
11	West Ecclesfield	117	3.02%
12	Stannington	111	2.86%
13	Richmond	108	2.78%
14	Darnall	106	2.73%
15	Stocksbridge & Upper Don	103	2.66%
16	East Ecclesfield	100	2.58%
17	Mosborough	89	2.29%
18	Manor Castle	58	1.50%
19	Beighton	53	1.37%
20	Hillsborough	44	1.13%
21	Dore & Totley	31	0.80%
22	Shiregreen & Brightside	26	0.67%
23	Graves Park	25	0.64%
24	Fulwood	20	0.52%
25	Broomhill	16	0.41%
26	Crookes	10	0.26%
27	Nether Edge	3	0.08%
	Other ²	3	0.08%
28	Ecclesall	2	0.05%
	Total	3878	100%

¹ CHS (Council Housing Services)

² The Council has 23 CHS properties in Thorpe Hesley, which is in Rotherham. 3 of these properties are 'Under-occupied'

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The Impact of Welfare Reform on Sheffield's Residents – Update March 2015

Appendix B - Additional Information on Local Assistance Scheme

Breakdown of number applicants to the Local Assistance Scheme by ward 2014/15¹

Rank (highest to lowest)	Ward	LAS Loans	LAS Grants	Total number of applications (combined)	% of total applications
1	Burngreave	140	358	498	9%
2	Gleadless Valley	141	344	485	9%
3	Manor Castle	130	330	460	8%
4	Firth Park	106	315	421	8%
5	Beauchief and Greenhill	134	260	394	7%
6	Arbourthorne	100	271	371	7%
7	Southey	72	265	337	6%
8	Central	131	191	322	6%
9	Shiregreen and Brightside	90	191	281	5%
10	Walkley	88	153	241	4%
11	Darnall	67	172	239	4%
12	Woodhouse	80	149	229	4%
13	Richmond	41	133	174	3%
14	Mosborough	20	115	135	2%
15	Birley	27	85	112	2%
16	Stannington	36	71	107	2%
	<i>[Not known]</i>	32	62	94	2%
17	Hillsborough	40	51	91	2%
18	West Ecclesfield	23	58	81	1%
19	Stocksbridge and Upper Don	28	48	76	1%
20	Beighton	11	45	56	1%
21	East Ecclesfield	13	40	53	1%
22	Nether Edge	20	32	52	1%
23	Broomhill	22	22	44	1%
24	Crookes	7	26	33	1%
25	Graves Park	7	20	27	<0.5%
26	Dore and Totley	3	22	25	<0.5%
27	Fulwood	4	12	16	<0.5%
28	Ecclesall	2	11	13	<0.5%
	Totals:	1615	3852	5467	100%

¹ Data correct at 03/03/15

The Impact of Welfare Reform on Sheffield's Residents – Update March 2015

Appendix B - Additional Information on Local Assistance Scheme

Customer profile for applicants to the Local Assistance Scheme 2014/15²

Age	Total	Loan	%	Grant	%
25-39	2563	879	54%	1684	44%
40-65	1712	444	27%	1268	33%
Under 25	1068	282	17%	786	20%
Over 65	124	10	1%	114	3%
Total	5467	1615	100%	3852	100%

Household type	Total	Loan	%	Grant	%
Single	2719	967	60%	1752	45%
Couple without children	217	68	4%	149	4%
Single Parent	1704	364	23%	1340	35%
Couple living with children	564	142	9%	422	11%
Living with non-dependant	263	74	5%	189	5%
Total	5467	1615	100%	3852	100%

Gender	Total	Loan	%	Grant	%
Male	2162	805	50%	1357	35%
Female	3305	810	50%	2495	65%
Total	5467	1615	100%	3852	100%

Disability	Total	Loan	%	Grant	%
Blind	20	3	0%	17	0%
Disabled	2250	681	42%	1569	41%
Mental Health	1945	639	40%	1306	34%

² Data correct at 03/03/15



Report to Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 26th March 2015

Report of: Interim Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods
Services – Communities Portfolio

Subject: Social Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract

Author of Report: Iain Allott (Strategic Lead for Repairs Service: Housing
& Neighbourhoods Service – Communities Portfolio.
(Christelle Hovine: 0114 2736495)

Summary:

The Council agreed a contract for Repairs and Maintenance services to tenants' homes with Kier Services Ltd (Kier) which commenced on the 1st April 2014 for a period of 3 years (with the option to extend by a further 2 years)

The contract sets out the Council's ambitions for re- structuring the service to provide a service fit to be integrated with the Council housing service at the end of the contract period should that remain the Council's ambition.

The contract contains service standards and targets for service delivery which build on the previous contract and acknowledge that improvements are required in certain parts of the service.

A strong partnership between Kier as provider, tenants and leaseholders and Sheffield City Council to achieve the efficiencies, benefits and continuous improvements envisaged for the service.

The information presented has been requested by the Committee to enable scrutiny to consider the progress made on implementing the requirements of the contract.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	x
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	

Background Papers:

Report to Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 26th March 2014: Social Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract

Cabinet Report 14th January 2015: Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan: HRA Budget and Rent Increase 2015/16.

Category of Report: OPEN / CLOSED (please specify)

1. Background

1.1 The Social Housing Repairs and Maintenance contract commenced on the 1st April 2014 following a competitive procurement.

1.2 The Council's preference would be to consider an in-sourcing option at the end of the contract period. However, to achieve this will require significant progress to be made as part of the new contract.

1.3 The contract contains service standards to which the Repairs and Maintenance contractor must deliver or incur financial deductions through a Performance Deduction Mechanism.

1.4 Under the arrangements for providing the service from 1st April 2014 the Housing Repairs Call centre it was agreed that this would transfer into the Corporate Contact Centre as a dedicated Housing Repairs Service.

1.5 A report will be presented to Cabinet on the 18th March 2015 on the options for the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service after the end on the current contract.

1.3 This report was requested by the Committee to inform on the progress made on delivering the contract objectives following its report to this Committee in March 2014.

2 Progress Update

Efficiency savings

The budget for the first year of the contract was set at £37m in the 2014/15 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan update. This year's budget proposals won't be finalised until the meeting of the City Council at the start of February.

In order that the required savings of £665k/ per year are realised over the 3 years of the contract, the total revenue repairs budgets for 2015/16 and 2016/17 are proposed to be capped at a total of £63m.

Based on current progress this objective will be met.

Performance against service standards

The contract has Performance Indicators (PI) which requires Kier to perform to agreed service standards or potentially incur penalties across a range of activities.

Kier Services - commitment schedule audit

The contract allows for Sheffield City Council to carry out a periodic audit of progress against the commitments made by Kier in their method statements. Failure to achieve a score of 2.5 (out of a maximum of 5) results in a financial penalty for Kier. The first audit was carried out in November / December 2014. Generally each bid commitment achieved a score of 2.5 or more, however

some areas around mobilisation of the contract, subcontractor management, complaint management and progress with the modernisation of the workforce achieved a score of less than 2.5. A detailed Action Plan is now in place having been developed with Kier Services to improve this.

Integration with the Housing Service

The intention was to work as part of an integrated team with the Housing Service as part of its 'Hub' model, significant progress has been made and 3 hubs are currently in place across the city serving the 6 Housing Areas:

- North Hub- Moonshine Lane Housing Office
- South Hub - Lowedges Housing Office
- Central Hub- Manor lane

To improve the customer service new initiatives are being trialled in the North hub around call handling with a dedicated resource now in place to take calls. Call monitoring software will be put in place from January 2015. This software will enable SCC to monitor Kiers call handling performance at the Hub and the data will be used to improve enquiry management and communication with the SCC Corporate Contact Centre.

A trial is also being undertaken in the North Hub where customers who have 55 day planned repairs will be contacted within a maximum of 15 days for an appointment time for repairs to be carried out.

The Handyperson Service

This has been implemented in all Housing Areas. There are six handyperson(s) providing assistance to vulnerable customers by completing small jobs in the home that they cannot carry out themselves. This includes for example decorating, hanging curtains and fitting shelves. The service is very popular and achieves consistently high levels of customer satisfaction.

The Handypersons also assist with the resolution of low level customer complaints and problems, allowing for a more customer focused reactive approach to complaint management.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The rollout of tablet devices to Kier staff continues across the repairs, voids and gas activities and opportunities are being explored to fully integrate these with other software to improve the delivery of the service.

Salary based reward scheme

As part of the bid commitments Kier Services set out as part of their bid submission their plans to review their pay and reward scheme during the first 2 years. This is progressing and the overall plan is for all operatives to be on a salary scheme by 1st January 2016.

Complaints Process Review

The complaints / customer interface has been process mapped and Kier have put in place a dedicated team based at Manor Lane who will manage Sheffield City Council Corporate Contact Centre enquiries and the customer complaints process. This has resulted in quicker resolutions for customers.

The handyperson service will be used wherever possible to respond to complaints quickly and resolve to the customers satisfaction.

Gas Servicing / Heating Mechanical & Electrical Service

Gas Servicing is within the target set in the contract.

The electrical teams are now split between the 3 Hubs. This change to the way the service is delivered has brought about some challenges to complete repairs within the time scale in the contract and performance continues to be reviewed to ensure electrical repairs are carried out on time.

Voids

The contract contains targets for bringing void properties to the let able standard with penalties for missing targets. Kier have made considerable changes to the way they deliver the service to address this challenge. The roles of voids inspector and work supervisor have been combined and mobile technology introduced. This has increased the time spent on site with a reduced turnaround time.

The improved mobile technology includes photographs providing comprehensive visual information about the property which is assisting with any recharges for damage and recording the condition of the property.

Performance indicators have been developed for this contract and do not make a like for like comparison with the previous contract however there is evidence to show that the time taken to carry out a repair is around 18% faster than the average in the final year of the previous contract.

Performance

Performance remains on or above the targets in the contract with a few exceptions which are being addressed.

Sheffield City Council Corporate Contact Centre:

The Repairs contact centre has been provided by SCC since 1st April 2014. Before this it was provided by the LLP. The Kier LLP contract arrangements (sub-contracted to Liberata). Whilst not part of the contract delivered by Kier it is an important aspect of the service interfacing with both customers, Kier and the Housing Service for the delivery of the service. The Contact Centre has agreed service standards and targets against which performance is measured.

Performance since April 2014 has been below target for calls answered on time. This has been reflected in negative feedback from customers. However, the Council and Kier have been working together to improve performance and have agreed the first of a series of process changes. A change in the way that calls and information is transferred between teams in the Council's service centre is due to go live on Monday 12th January. This will reduce the handling time on calls where referrals to Kier are required.

Changes have been made to the telephony structure for repairs calls meaning that tenants will be able to select an appropriate option depending on the nature of their call ensuring they get through to the correct person to deal with their call in the first instance. Part of the review process has been developing and multi-skilling current call advisors to give the Contact Centre increased flexibility and efficiency.

3. What does this mean for the Tenants of Sheffield?

3.1 The service standards and targets in the contract will bring about a repair service that:

- Will provide a customer focused service through improved call handling, a right first time approach and improved complaint management.
- Provides a value for money service that supports the HRA Business Plan.
- Further benefits from the use of Mobile Technology.
- Will allow for a more integrated service with the Housing and other Council Services at the end of the contract period should that remain the Council's ambition.

4. Recommendation

4.1 The Committee is asked to note the report and provide views and comments on the progress to date.



Sheffield's Private rented sector

Page 45

Michelle Slater

March 2015

Sheffield *where everyone matters*

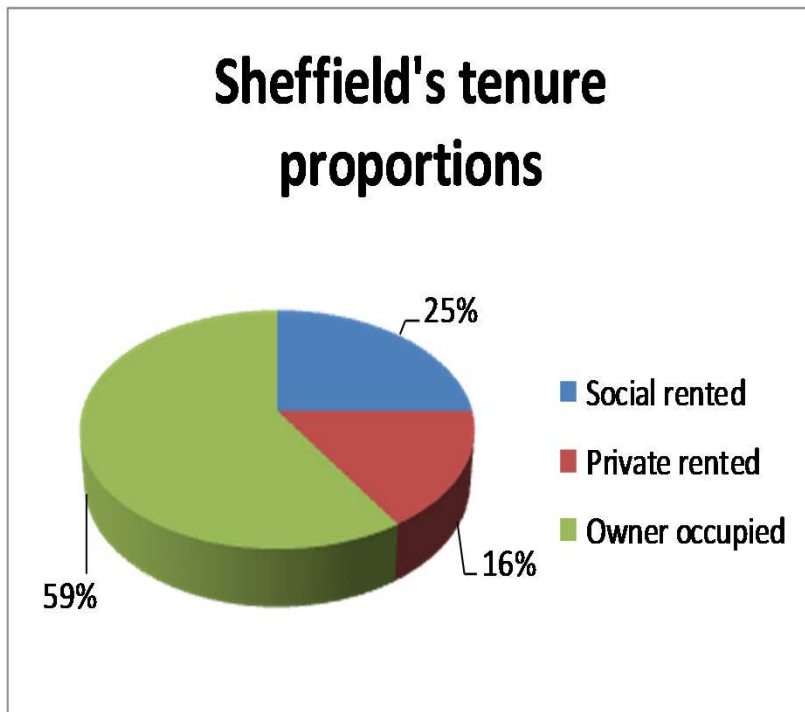


Agenda Item 9

Today I'll talk about...

- Reminder about the private rented sector
- Page Hall general round up
- Selective Licensing
- What else we've been doing this year!

A reminder - PR Sector in Sheffield



- Sector doubled in past 10 years
- Around 35,000 households in PR sector
- Around 41,000 in council housing
- More vulnerable people in the sector
- More landlords
- Less time to collect data and manage what we find

Page Hall Grid update

- New Neighbourhood Manager
- Gold, Silver and Amber approach
- Selective Licensing plus voluntary scheme – April 2014
- NEVER intended to 'sort out' all the problems
- Waste, fly-tipping, congregations on streets, education, health and safeguarding challenges still being managed



Page Hall Selective Licensing



Reminder – licensing is an administrative process

- 258 licence applications
 - 227 are valid (full info and payment)
- 85 exemptions requested
 - 51 are valid (empty or close family member)
- 186 Draft licences issued (stat consultation)
 - 132 Actual licences issued



Page Hall Selective Licensing



- 63 landlords have attended our training course
- Developed with RLA – we wrote it and they deliver it
- 81% satisfaction – although you'd never believe it!
- Landlord information pack developed
- Dedicated enforcement staff
- Over 700 full and partial inspections/visits

Enforcement visits...



- Tampered meters – worked with UK Revenue Protection Association
- Benefit fraud – reported to HMRC/DWP
- Safeguarding referrals
- Prohibition order served – attic room
- 70 Notices already served for works
- Remember - no Govt resources left to carry this on after March

Selective Licensing...



- 6 court cases complete
- 22 others pending investigation or court dates
- Massive amount of time responding to FOIs/DPA
- They're not displacing – they're still arriving
- So we have valuable lesson about the tools we have and when they're appropriate



Sheffield's a big place!..



- ESP/chasing debts
- 52+ Learning disabilities properties identified
- Enforcing problematic empty homes – all with a story
- Lots of landlord training and educating
- Implemented new legislation for Letting agents
- Already sent out 6 Notices



Sheffield's a big place!..



- Developed a new and better 'Fit and Proper' procedure
- 15 landlords/agents brought in for interview
- Some Interviews Under Caution (like the police)
- Some being 'monitored'
- 8 have been/being refused
- Attack is the best form of defence – apparently!

Sheffield's a big place!..



- Visits from other LAs
- Called on for policy guidance/views
- Showcasing our work
- Spoken at 5 conferences already – with another 2 booked in
- Building partnerships and winning awards
- Building a team fit for the future..

Things to think about...



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



HM Courts
& Tribunals
Service

- Precedents and case law
- Landlords are uniting
- Loss of funding to target rogue landlords
- Resources to prosecute – even more need to target
- Sector will continue to grow (eg. pensions)
- Our duty to rehouse people isn't getting any easier
- A realistic scenario – more intervention in managing the sector?



Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 26th March 2015

Report of: Policy and Improvement Officer

Subject: Written responses to public questions

Author of Report: Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer
matthew.borland@sheffield.gov.uk
 0114 273 5065

Summary:

This report provides the Committee with copies of written responses to public questions asked at the Committee's meeting on 12th February 2015. The written responses are included as part of the Committee's meeting papers as the way of placing the responses on the public record.

- Appendix A has the five public questions from Mr Martin Brighton that the Committee agreed a written response would be provided to.
- Appendix B is the written response from the Interim Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Service to questions 1 to 4.
- Appendix C is the written response from the Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee to question 5.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	X

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Note the report

Background Papers: None

Category of Report: OPEN

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Questions for the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee 12 February 2015

Subject: Council Policy - Openness and Transparency and Accountability

Issue: A Citizen's Question about the withdrawal of the facility for Citizens' Questions at Council Meetings.

Preamble: The following presentation and questions had been prepared for the January meeting, which was cancelled. Current casework precludes this citizen from attending on 12 February.

Summary:

The facility for the standard agenda item 'Questions from Members of the Public' has been withdrawn from Area Housing Forum Meetings.

This removes the important elements of the much-publicised Council's claims to be Open, Transparent and Accountable.

In addition, the way in which the Council Policy change has been introduced has itself been shrouded by a lack of Openness, Transparency and Accountability.

What has happened is also contrary to what was understood to have been the expressed wishes of Elected Members when the format of Area Housing Forum Meetings was discussed.

This presentation raises questions for the Scrutiny Committee as indicators for an investigation into how this unacceptable situation has occurred and stresses that the Scrutiny Committee is not limited to the questions below, for which a written response would be appreciated.

Background:

It has been accepted practice now for many years that Council Public Meetings include an agenda item for Questions from Members of the Public. This practice was also applied to the Housing Area Management Meetings, which later became the Area Housing Forums when the management of Council Housing went in-house.

The questions and their answers formed a part of the public record.

When discussing the terms of reference for these meetings, TARA representatives, Elected Members, and Council Officers, all agreed that Questions from Members of the Public was to be retained.

However, recently, the agenda item was removed from the Area Housing Forum Meetings.

When the Council was asked why the Agenda item for Questions from Members of the Public was removed, the answer was given to the effect the removal of the facility allowing members of the public to ask questions was to improve the management of the meeting.

In fact the Council's answer given is not true.

For many years this Council has had a policy whereby citizens can ask questions at public meetings.

The accepted practice has been that the questions would be answered if possible, or alternatively a written response provided.

If the questions specifically asked for information for which the Freedom of Information applied, then the principles of the FoIA were engaged.

On the basis of the principle that questions asked in public should also be answered in public, both the questions and their answers formed part of the public record.

The above arrangement has been operating for years, without any disruption to the management of Council meetings.

This accepted custom and practice has been adopted at all levels of Council meetings, from Full Council, at Cabinet, and even at these Scrutiny meetings.

The fact that years of custom and practice in this regard have been abandoned for Area Housing Forum Meetings is a dangerous step seen as a potential 'thin-end-of-the-wedge' that could be spread, not only throughout Council Housing meetings, but also throughout the entire Council.

Such would be contrary to Council policy, made all the worse by the manner in which the Policy change appears to have been introduced by back-door means and predicated upon a false statement.

Questions for this Scrutiny Meeting

Would this Scrutiny Panel please discuss and arrange for appropriate advice when answering the following considerations, which in no way limit the scope of any investigation:

- 1 WHO first proposed that the agenda item 'Questions from Members of the Public' be removed from Area Housing Meetings – and WHY?
- 2 When was the removal of the item discussed – please provide the minutes of the meeting.

3 Who (which Elected Member) approved the removal of the agenda item from Area Housing Meetings?

4 Please provide the document signed by the appropriate Elected Member, and or Senior Council Officers, that approved the removal of the agenda item, along with any documents that purported to rationalise the decision to remove the agenda item.

5 Would the Scrutiny Committee please indicate whether it supports the removal of the agenda item, or not, and give reasons.

Thank you for your consideration.

martin brighton

Additional Personal notes, for information only:

Minutes have been issued falsely portraying me as repeatedly complaining, which is not my practice at meetings at which I am a member.

Not only must minutes now be changed, but also all those who receive copies of the minutes must be informed of the amendments.

This practice is but one way in which this citizen is being demonised.

Subject Access Requests: initial outcomes – by some council officers, supported by some elected members, there have been years of the creation and maintenance of the widely disseminated illusion of this citizen being some kind of three-headed-beast-of-the-devil, thereby whipping up corporate hysteria and paranoia against this citizen, to the extent that even people who do not know this citizen are negatively predisposed.

The material is highly inflammatory, deliberately and maliciously inaccurate beyond even rational fantasy, and clearly designed to widely incite hatred against this citizen.

There have been repeated attempts to have this citizen removed from council meetings, not just area housing forums, also based upon defamatory and libellous falsehoods, and contrary to Council Standing Orders and meeting Terms of Reference.

No action has at any time been taken against those council officers who have continued their ongoing obsessive vendetta against this citizen for years.

All of the above are carried out with the support of some elected members.

Please note that when the above issues are mentioned at meetings, the issues are never included in the minutes.

Regards, martin

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Questions for the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee 12 February 2015

Questions for this Scrutiny Meeting

Would this Scrutiny Panel please discuss and arrange for appropriate advice when answering the following considerations, which in no way limit the scope of any investigation:

- 1 WHO first proposed that the agenda item 'Questions from Members of the Public' be removed from Area Housing Meetings – and WHY?
- 2 When was the removal of the item discussed – please provide the minutes of the meeting.
- 3 Who (which Elected Member) approved the removal of the agenda item from Area Housing Meetings?
- 4 Please provide the document signed by the appropriate Elected Member, and or Senior Council Officers, that approved the removal of the agenda item, along with any documents that purported to rationalise the decision to remove the agenda item.
- 5 Would the Scrutiny Committee please indicate whether it supports the removal of the agenda item, or not, and give reasons.

RESPONSE

This is the fourth time that Mr Brighton has asked these or similar questions. The other three occasions were as follows –

1. In an email to J Loveless on 8-12-14 (see Appendix 1 below)
2. At Full Council on 7-1-15 (see Appendix 2 below)
3. At Community Engagement Partnership Group on 19-2-15 when he was told by J Loveless that he had already been given answers to these questions

In my opinion the Council has already given an adequate series of replies to these questions and Mr Brighton should be told that there is nothing to add to previous replies.

Appendix 1

On 8 Dec 2014 Mr Brighton sent this email to J Loveless –

I would be grateful for your advice:

Item 7 Paper F [Terms of reference of Local Area Housing Forums]

"2.4 Members of the public can attend meetings as observers. They may not ask questions or take part in the meeting."

It is accepted that members of the public can not ask questions during the meeting. However, the wording appears unclear. It is already established council policy that citizens have an agenda item at the start of each meeting to ask questions. Could you please confirm that this is still the case, as I may have some questions for the meeting?

On 18 Dec J Loveless replied to MB as follows –

Dear Mr Brighton,

Thank you for your email.

The Council's Constitution refers to citizens having the right to participate in question time at Council bodies and other such meetings. It is not the intention of the Constitution to be prescriptive on the matter of whether or not "other such meetings" includes bodies such as Local Area Housing Forums (LAHFs), and the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service has therefore exercised discretion on this matter and decided that members of the public may not ask questions or take part in LAHF meetings. LAHFS are different from Area Boards, with less decision-making and more consultation, and as they combine some of the functions of the Area Boards with the functions of the old Local Housing Forums there are time pressures. By removing time for public questions we are better able to manage the business of these meetings. I realise that you will be disappointed about this. However, as you know, there are other opportunities open to members of the public wishing to comment on and influence the delivery of our services, including contacting local Councillors and attending and asking questions at meetings of Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee and Full Council.

I appreciate that you would have liked a response before the 9 December meeting of the LAHF but unfortunately that was not possible.

I hope that this answers your query. If you wish to take the matter further please visit this webpage –

<https://www.sheffieldhomes.org.uk/myCommunity/HaveYourSay/ComplaintsPraiseAndSuggestions.aspx>

Yours sincerely,

John Loveless

Appendix 2

At Full Council on 7 January MB asked questions and received answers. These were minuted as follows -

5.2.2 Public Questions Concerning Area Housing Forum Meetings and Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel (HANAP) Meetings

Mr Brighton asked the following questions concerning Openness and Accountability:

1. Why has the facility for citizens' questions been removed from Area Housing Forum Meetings?
2. At what meeting was this change to Council policy debated and approved by elected members?
3. At what meeting was the proposal to change the Council policy given prior consultation and consent from tenants?
4. Who authorised the change?
5. Why are citizens not allowed to attend HANAP meetings as observers, or ask Citizen's questions?
6. At what meeting was this change to Council policy debated and approved by elected members?
7. At what meeting was the proposal to change the Council policy given prior consultation and consent from tenants?
8. Who authorised the change?

Councillor Harry Harpham, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods responded that the Area Housing Forum Meetings were not public meetings and there were therefore no public questions. Other meetings and fora did exist where people were encouraged to participate and ask questions. There had been no change in policy regarding the Area Housing Forum meetings. With regard to meetings of HANAP, there were no public questions at that particular body. This was to help manage time at those meetings. In relation to Mr Brighton's other questions, Councillor Harpham stated that there had not been any change in policy.

Written Response from Cllr Chris Weldon, Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee to Martin Brighton's fifth question on "Council Policy - Openness and Transparency and Accountability"

Question

Would the Scrutiny Committee please indicate whether it supports the removal of the agenda item, or not, and give reasons.

Response

I would refer you to Cllr Harry Harpham's answers to your questions on this topic at Full Council on 7th January 2015:

5.2.2 Public Questions Concerning Area Housing Forum Meetings and Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel (HANAP) Meetings

Mr Brighton asked the following questions concerning Openness and Accountability:

1. Why has the facility for citizens' questions been removed from Area Housing Forum Meetings?
2. At what meeting was this change to Council policy debated and approved by elected members?
3. At what meeting was the proposal to change the Council policy given prior consultation and consent from tenants?
4. Who authorised the change?
5. Why are citizens not allowed to attend HANAP meetings as observers, or ask Citizen's questions?
6. At what meeting was this change to Council policy debated and approved by elected members?
7. At what meeting was the proposal to change the Council policy given prior consultation and consent from tenants?
8. Who authorised the change?

Councillor Harry Harpham, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods responded that the Area Housing Forum Meetings were not public meetings and there were therefore no public questions. Other meetings and fora did exist where people were encouraged to participate and ask questions. There had been no change in policy regarding the Area Housing Forum meetings. With regard to meetings of HANAP, there were no public questions at that particular body. This was to help manage time at those meetings. In relation to Mr Brighton's other questions, Councillor Harpham stated that there had not been any change in policy.

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**Report to the Safer and Stronger
Communities Scrutiny & policy development
Committee
26th March 2015**

Report of: Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Service

Subject: Progress on Implementation of the Allocations Policy

Author of Report: Dan Parry Project Manager/Rosie Sheldon Access to Housing Service Manager Contact number 2053856

Summary:

The Scrutiny Committee has requested a written update on the implementation of the new Allocations Policy.

The new policy was agreed by Cabinet in March 2013 and authority was delegated to the Executive Director for Communities to fully implement the new Allocations Policy once necessary updates to the Choice Based Lettings Information Technology system is completed.

The report sets out an update on progress to date and the revised time line for full implementation which is now expected to be completed by April 2016. This reflects the timescales required by the supplier to make amendments to the system which have significantly increased. A number of provisions that are introduced in the policy will be implemented early prior to the system being amended and the details of these changes are explained in the report.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	√
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Note and comment on progress to date

Background Papers:

Category of Report: OPEN

Report of the Director of Housing And Neighborhoods**Progress on Implementation of the Allocations Policy****1. Introduction/Context**

- 1.1 An update on the progress of the Allocations Policy implementation has been requested by the Scrutiny Committee.

- 1.2 The new Allocations Policy was agreed by Cabinet in April 2013, with an initial commitment to implement the policy by April 2014. Due to delays caused by the necessary changes to the IT system the implementation date for the Allocations Policy was revised to October 2015. However, the IT supplier has now confirmed they will not be able to undertake all necessary work to meet this timescale, and therefore full implementation is now expected to be April 2016. This report outlines the activities undertaken to prepare for the implementation of the new policy to date, sets out the proposed early implementation of provisions that are not dependent on IT, and sets out the reasons for the requirement to delay full implementation.

2. Main body of report, matters for consideration**2.1 Revised Timeline for Full Implementation**

The Allocations Policy relies upon significant changes being made to the Choice Base Lettings (CBL) IT system. The CBL IT system provider indicated that they would be able to complete the work by October 2015. The system supplier, Abris has now received our full specification detailing each of the amendments we require. Abris however are now not able to deliver all of the required modifications until January 2016 due to the volume of other work requests they have outstanding from other customers.

Once this has been completed approximately 400 staff will require training on the new policy, supporting processes and system changes. This means we are not be able to fully implement the Allocations Policy until April 2016

A project board and dedicated project manager are in place to lead the implementation which is proceeding to the revised plan and timeline. However it should be noted that a number of risks remain that could affect the implementation, and these will be closely monitored with remedial action taken where necessary to keep the project on course. This includes co-ordinating activity where possible to run concurrently with the implementation

of the Housing + model which will also involve system changes and staff training in the same timeframe.

To help ensure that there is no further delay, the development of the IT system requirements should be closely managed and incrementally tested. This work has been commissioned through a series of small work orders. This will be delivered to the Council between August 2015 and January 2016.

2.2 **Phased Implementation**

A number of the provisions that are contained within the Allocations Policy can be implemented early as they are not reliant upon IT changes but can be introduced by changing processes. An Individual Cabinet Members Report has been drafted which, if agreed, will allow for these provisions to be implemented by including them in the current Lettings Policy.

2.3 Assuming the ICMR is agreed and we are able to proceed in this way a revised communication plan will be put into place to ensure that customers, staff and councillors are informed of these changes.

2.4 The proposed amendments to the Lettings Policy include:

- Requesting satisfactory identification for people joining Sheffield City Council's Housing register at the point of their registration
- Restricting customers from joining the housing register for a period of two years after being rehoused to social housing
- Preventing people over 25 years of age being included in more than one housing registration
- Allow approved foster carers and adopters, subject to confirmation, access to larger accommodation for which they will be eligible following the placement of a child to their care

2.5 **Review of Age Designation**

Our current Lettings Policy provides for three age designations for all our flats and bungalow accommodation. This means that we will try to let these to people over the minimum age limit set for those properties. The current age designations are:

- Over 60
- Over 40
- General Needs – normally over 18

The new Allocations Policy includes a change to these categories and provides for just two age designations, which are over 60 or general needs.

We have reviewed those properties in the current 40+ category and made proposals to move them into the general needs or over 60 categories before the new policy is introduced. The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee also asked us to undertake a comprehensive review of all age designated properties to ensure that these were still fit for purpose and represented the best use of Council stock. The review of age designated accommodation has combined both these requirements.

This review has now been completed and proposals have been submitted to the Director of Housing for authorisation. Based on an analysis of demand and considering all feedback received, this has identified a number of properties where the age designation should remain unchanged, and others where there is no or low demand for age designated properties. Re-designation will free up housing for other customers who are in housing need and cannot currently access these properties.

Once the proposed changes have been authorised ward meetings with Cabinet Members will be arranged to inform them of the decisions prior to affected customers being informed. All affected residents will be written to advising them of any changes. It is not anticipated that there will be any immediate impacts of changes as the profile of tenants will only change potentially as properties fall vacant. However, it has been agreed that tenants in any blocks of flats that are currently designated for over 60s that are re-designated as general needs, will be offered a priority to move to another 60+ property.

2.6 Proposed Timetable

A revised project plan has been produced which reflects the delay to the IT systems changes. The implementation timeline has been scoped and planned based on the revised full implementation date of April 2016:

- Phase 1 implementation of Allocations Policy introduced from May 2015
- Consider a possible second phase of none IT dependant policy implementation in the Autumn of 2015
- Abris to deliver our IT requirements between August 2015 and January 2016 via a detailed timeline programme
- All IT modifications will require testing, each proposed to last between 5 and 10 days. This will take place between August 2015 and January 2016
- Training plans and scripts need to be developed and delivered. This will take place between August 2015 and January 2016
- To reassess all applicants and allocate to the correct new band is a much more intensive task than originally envisaged and will take approximately 3 months. This will take place between January and March 2016
- Staff to be trained on system changes Feb-March 2016

3.0 Financial Implications

£50,000 has been spent on project team costs over the period April 2014 to March 2015 from the project budget. There is a current underspend across the project budget due to slippage in timescales for implementation. The surplus budget will need to be carried forward to fund ongoing work for the period April 2015 to March 2016 due to the revised timetable.

The budget for the project will be reviewed and adjusted due to an increase in the cost of IT changes from the estimated £60,000 to £84,000 and the increase in staffing costs to extend the implementation team until the new implementation date of April 2016.

3.1 Summary of estimated costs

Activity	Cost
Advertising and communications	£40,409
Support for customers at 'go live'	£36,168
Abritas and IT changes (estimated)	£60,000
Project team staffing	£108,528
Documentation scanning	£3,600
Re assessment of applicants	£27,300
Sub total	£276,005
Contingency	£55,201
Total	£331,206

The contingency is in place to account for the following:

- Unknown IT system change costs
- Any additional customer support, communications or advertising that may be required
- Any other unforeseen cost, this has already included additional IT costs

4 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?

4.1 Impact of the New Policy for Housing Applicants

	Issue	Impact for Customers	Implementation Date
1	Age Designation	More options for younger applicants where properties are re-designated as general needs. Customers in 60+ blocks offered priority to move if wish to do so.	May 2015
2	Identification required	Customers to provide ID at the point of registration in order for application	May 2015

		validation to take place. This will help to reduce the risk of fraud.	
3	Two year restriction	Once rehoused under Choice Based Lettings customers cannot reapply to join the register for two years. This will help to reduce turnover so help to reduce rent losses caused by vacancies, and contribute to tenancy sustainment.	May 2015
4	Multiple applications	Customers aged over twenty five can only be registered on one application. This will help to ensure fairness in the allocation of properties and reduce duplication of work in administering the system.	May 2015
5	Children and Young People	By providing routes into suitable council housing for families who are approved foster carers and adoptive parents this will support successful outcomes for vulnerable children.	May 2015
6	Priority Banding	Assessed for one of three priority bands so more urgent housing need leads to quicker rehousing. This will contribute to supporting independent living and prevent more expensive residential care and delays in hospital discharges.	April 2016
7	Registration	Required to provide references, and keep their registration updated annually. Customers with poor tenancy history may be unable to register or have reduced preference in certain circumstances. We will be better able to identify customers who if awarded a tenancy may need targeted support. This will improve tenancy sustainment and help to reduce anti-social behaviour and rent arrears for example. An up-to date register will make it easier to administer the system, assess housing need and plan for provision.	April 2016

Implementation of the policy changes later than originally anticipated may mean that further policy changes will need to be made as a result of changes in statutory guidance or legislation or the local housing market. It is proposed to establish a mechanism for a standing review of the policy so that it is reviewed on a more regular basis and updated more swiftly in response to external influences. Delays to the implementation may mean that some of the expected benefits of implementing the policy will not be achieved as quickly as originally expected. The Equality Impact Assessment for the project is

being revised to take account of this. Lessons learned are being collated and will be reflected in future work on managing the policy and any changes.

5. Recommendation

- 5.2 The Committee is asked to note the progress made so far and comment on the progress to date

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Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 26 th March 2015

Report of: Janet Sharpe (Interim Director of Council Housing)

Subject: Review of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM)

Author of Report: Bethan Williams, Acting Safer Neighbourhood Manager.

Summary:

Following a presentation on 26th September 2013, the Committee requested a quarterly progress report regarding Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM), with a particular focus on:

- Improving the relationship between PRAM and the Neighbourhood Action Groups; and
- The development of a citywide PRAM.

This is the fifth of the quarterly reports.

The last report I submitted to the Committee was for the special meeting on the 12th February 2015, due to the tight timescales between this meeting and the last report, there are no significant updates to report, I have attached the previous reports for information.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	

Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	X
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The Committee is asked to note progress and provide views, comments and recommendations.

Background Papers:

Previous Scrutiny Committee minutes

Category of Report: OPEN

Quarterly Report of the Interim Head of Council Housing Review of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting

1. Introduction/Context

1.1 In August 2012, the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM) was introduced to the East of the city in order to:

- Improve the way in which we identify and support vulnerable people experiencing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) ;
- Provide leadership and accountability; and
- Better link ASB resources with Health and Social Care colleagues.

1.2 Following a presentation on 26th September 2013, the Committee requested a quarterly progress report regarding Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM), with a particular focus on:

- Improving the relationship between PRAM and the Neighbourhood Action Groups; and
- The development of a citywide PRAM.

1.3 This is the fourth update report submitted.

2. Improving the relationship between PRAM and the Neighbourhood Action Group,(NAGs)

2.1 The PRAM is continuing to be regularly reviewed, and streamlined to ensure that no duplication is taking place. I am currently working with safeguarding adults to ensure that the right partners are involved in the problem solving around vulnerable victims.

2.2 The PRAM continues to offer an important touchstone for officers and partners involved in 'by-exception' cases where local level problem solving has hit a blockage, the primary focus remains on people experiencing ASB and strengthening the link with colleagues in Health and Social Care.

2.3 South Yorkshire Police have recently introduced a new procedure for identifying and addressing repeat vulnerable victims, I am currently working with them and partners to ensure that those identified are addressed in line with the currently City Wide processes.

2.4 I am currently working alongside South Yorkshire Police and analysts to ensure the data and information provided regarding repeat and vulnerable victims is addresses locally through the NAG process.

2.5 As previously emphasised, it is important that the NAGs are not viewed as the first port of call for ASB cases where a multi-agency response is required. With this in mind, Safer Neighbourhood Officers continue to utilise the NAGs for more challenging cases, this has enabled them to

provide a greater focus on vulnerable people experiencing ASB; improving the level of support; and speeding up resolution.

- 2.6 The primary focus of the NAGs continues to support vulnerable people experiencing ASB and manage those committing ASB. This work continues to be best addressed with by specialist agencies and pre-existing structures to ensure that local level information sharing and local level problem solving is addressed.
- 2.7 With the introduction of new ASB legislation from the 20th October the NAG also provides a platform for agencies to share information relating to the management of those who have committed ASB
- 2.8 The Acting Safer Neighbourhood Manager will, with partners continue to review and monitor the Citywide role out over the next quarter and report back to the committee in the next quarterly report.



Report to Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

9 March 2015

Report of: Janet Sharpe – Interim Director of Housing Services

Subject: Right to buy update report

Author of Report: Andrew Routley – Home Ownership Team Leader (2736338)

Summary:

The attached report is the bi-monthly update of the position right to buy position including the total sales, average selling price and previous years information.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	X
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The Committee is asked to note the update.

Background Papers: Not applicable

Category of Report: OPEN

Right to buy update report

1. Introduction

1.1 The following report is an update of the current position of right to buy. There are four main statistical tables showing the following information

Table 1 – Number of applications in the current year and previous 3 years comparison.

Table 2 – Number of sales in current year, the forecast for the year and the variance from the forecast. It also provides the previous 3 years sales information for comparison

Table 3 – The sales receipt generated. It also provides the previous 3 years information for comparison

Table 4 - Average sale price in current year. It also provides the previous 3 years information

1.2 The second part of the report is an update of any planned changes to right to buy legislation or issues that may affect the right to buy.

2.0 Right to buy statistical information

Table 1 Applications

Applications	2014/15 Year to date	2014/15 total Year to date	2013/14 cumulative	2012/13 cumulative	2011/12 cumulative
April	51	51	56	52	30
May	39	90	106	115	56
June	63	153	147	151	96
July	47	200	191	191	125
August	58	258	249	235	149
September	53	311	294	290	186
October	47	358	348	339	212
November	39	397	395	389	240
December	29	426	421	423	247
January	48	474	475	456	273
February	64	538	540	515	299
March			605	572	337
total	538	538	605	572	337
Average per month	48.9		50.4	47.7	28.1

The number RTB applications over the last 3 years have remained fairly constant at

around the 600 level.

Table 2 - Sales

Sales total	2014/15 Year to date	2014/15 cumulative Year to date	2014 /15 cumulative forecast	Variance	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
April	20	20	24	-4	27	6	12
May	12	32	48	-16	32	15	21
June	29	61	72	-11	49	19	30
July	22	83	96	-13	79	31	32
August	19	102	120	-18	94	36	39
September	33	135	144	-9	124	49	46
October	30	165	168	-3	142	58	60
November	23	188	192	-4	163	75	67
December	29	217	216	1	181	87	73
January	19	236	240	-4	205	101	81
February	23	259	264	-5	225	134	92
March			288		255	149	104
Total	259		288		255	149	104
Average per month	23.55		24		21.3	12.4	8.7

The current year's sales are broadly in line with the forecasted position and the full year target of 288 should be achievable.

Table

Sales receipt	Actual year to date	2014/15 cumulative year to date	2013/14 cumulative	2012/13 cumulative	2011/12 cumulative
April	£837,390	£837,390	£1,040,765	£229,860	£474,700
May	£523,067	£1,360,457	£1,201,265	£491,415	£868,675
June	£1,090,931	£2,451,388	£1,808,954	£641,140	£1,299,675
July	£708,349	£3,159,737	£2,937,732	£1,032,500	£1,466,875
August	£633,926	£3,793,663	£3,550,397	£1,290,420	£1,830,275
September	£1,317,606	£5,111,269	£4,709,689	£1,759,220	£2,103,825
October	£1,094,666	£6,205,935	£5,458,059	£2,144,180	£2,639,760
November	£957,542	£7,163,477	£6,259,377	£2,867,820	£2,940,380
December	£1,002,832	£8,166,309	£7,062,964	£3,283,680	£3,151,020
January	£618,526	£8,784,835	£7,974,774	£3,800,580	£3,535,145
February	£845,476	£9,630,311	£8,759,209	£4,980,355	£3,988,560
March			£10,035,935	£5,617,952	£4,480,210
Total		£10,752,768	£10,035,935	£5,617,952	£4,480,210

Figure in red is forecast year end position based on current average sale price

The total right to buy receipt is subject to pooling and does not represent cash retained by Sheffield City Council

Table 4 - Sale price

Average sale price	Actual year to date	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
April	£41,900	£38,500	£38,300	£39,600
May	£43,600	£32,100	£29,100	£43,800
June	£37,600	£35,700	£37,400	£47,900
July	£32,200	£37,600	£32,600	£55,700
August	£33,400	£40,800	£51,600	£51,900
September	£39,900	£38,600	£36,100	£39,100
October	£36,500	£41,600	£42,800	£41,200
November	£41,600	£38,200	£42,600	£42,900
December	£34,600	£44,600	£34,700	£35,100
January	£32,600	£38,000	£36,941	£48,000
February	£36,800	£39,200	£35,743	£41,200
March		£42,600	£42,507	£41,000
Average for year	£37,336	£38,958	£38,366	£43,950

There has been a slight decrease in the overall average sale price to £37,336. This is largely due to a greater number of leasehold properties (flats & maisonettes) that have been sold over the previous two months. Leasehold properties generally are valued lower and the tenant can achieve bigger discounts quicker. In a leasehold property tenant still requires 5 years to qualify but they receive 2% discount rather than 1% for every year they have been a tenant. This means that their starting discount is 50% compared to 35% for someone living in a freehold property.

The discount calculations are as follows and are based on the tenant having the minimum 5 years qualifying tenancy

Freehold - You automatically receive a 30% discount when you qualify plus an additional 5% for the number of years as tenant which gives a total of 35% discount

Leasehold – Receive an automatic 40% discount plus an additional 10% for the number of years as tenant which gives a total of 50% discount.

On average 25% of sales are from leasehold properties however in January and February the total was 40%

2.2 – Possible changes to the right to buy

The maximum discount has been uplifted by CPI inflationary figure of 1.2% meaning that the maximum cash discount will be £77,900. This will only apply to right to buy applications made on or after 6th April 2015

3. Recommendation

3.1 The Committee is asked to note the update.

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