

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Thursday 23 July 2015 at 4.00 pm

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

The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend

Membership

Councillors Tony Damms (Chair), Steve Ayriss (Deputy Chair), Penny Baker, David Barker, John Campbell, Sheila Constance, Richard Crowther, Keith Davis, Tony Downing, Denise Fox, Aodan Marken, Roy Munn, Sioned-Mair Richards, Richard Shaw and Zoe Sykes

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
23 JULY 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 meetings of the Committee held on 26 March 2015 and 20 May 2015
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public
- 7. Overview of the Committee's Role and Remit**
The Policy and Improvement Officer to report
- 8. Customer Engagement in the Housing Repairs Insourcing Project**
Report of Janet Sharpe, Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services
- 9. The Private Rented Sector in Sheffield**
Report of Janet Sharpe, Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services
- 10. Police and Crime Panel Update**
Councillor John Campbell to report
- 11. Work Programme 2015/16**
Report of the Policy and Improvement Officer
- 12. Written Responses to Public Questions**
Briefing note for information – Officers will not be in attendance
- 13. Welfare Reform July 2015 Update**
Briefing note for information – Officers will not be in attendance
- 14. Right to Buy Update Report**
Briefing note for information – Officers will not be in attendance

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday 10 September 2015 at 4.00pm in the Town Hall

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 26 March 2015

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

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sheila Constance and Richard Crowther.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 The Chair reported that appendices 3, 5 and 6 for agenda item 14a ‘ Call-in of decision on Future Options for the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service’ were not available to the public and press because they contained exempt information described in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and if Members wished to discuss these appendices the public and press would need to be excluded from the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 Councillor Josie Paszek declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 14a (Call-In of the Decision on ‘Future Options for the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service’) as she had been a member of a task and finish group which had contributed to the decision-making process. She indicated that she would leave the room during consideration of that item.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12th February 2015, were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 The Chair, Councillor Chris Weldon, indicated that the questions posed by Mick Watts on repairs and housing in general would be covered by officers at the relevant part of the meeting and added that he would also be provided with a written response which would be published with the agenda for the Committee’s next meeting.

The Chair also informed the Committee that further correspondence had been received from Mr Martin Brighton who was not satisfied with the response to his question submitted to the Committee’s last meeting. The Chair’s view was that the questions had been adequately answered and that Mr Brighton be referred to the Council’s complaints procedure if he remained dissatisfied.

6. THE IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM ON SHEFFIELD'S RESIDENTS - UPDATE MARCH 2015

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications, which provided an update on the impact of welfare reform on Sheffield's residents and included latest information, an understanding of how people were being affected by welfare reform and an update on hardship schemes. The report was introduced by Nicola Rees, Policy and Improvement Officer, who made particular reference to Under-Occupancy (Bedroom Tax), Council Tax Support, the Household Benefit Cap and the introduction of Universal Credit and the Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

6.2 Also present for this item were Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health, Maxine Stavrianakos, Head of Neighbourhood Intervention and Tenancy Support, and John Squire, Finance Manager.

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

- The 45 tenants who had been provided with Sheffield Credit Union Budgeting Accounts were all Council tenants. The delays in taking this up were because Universal Credit had not yet rolled out and it was expected that this would take off when that had been fully introduced. It should be noted that the use of these accounts had stopped evictions taking place.
- Thirteen people had been moved so far using the 'man and van' service.
- In relation to the migration to Universal Credit, it should be borne in mind that other authorities did not have the same demographic as Sheffield. Officers were liaising with colleagues in Manchester and Liverpool, so that lessons could be learnt from its introduction there. In addition, officers had attended events involving the Councils in Wigan and Oldham. There were also pathfinders throughout the country with Chesterfield and Barnsley now going live.
- It was understood that delays for PIP claimants had been caused by delays in arranging medical assessments and poor availability of assessment venues.
- Investigations would be made to look into the numbers of EU Migrant Workers who were destitute as a result of increased restrictions on benefits claims.
- The number of people receiving Council Tax Support fluctuated throughout the year and an analysis would be conducted to examine the causes of these fluctuations.
- The CRESR (Sheffield Hallam University Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research) report would feed into work being undertaken to integrate welfare reform and policy strategy.

- Work was being undertaken through the Welfare Reform Implementation Group and the re-organised Citizens' Advice Bureau to try to mitigate the effects of the welfare reforms. In addition, circulars were sent out to all Councillors providing them with information on the effects of the welfare reforms.
- The Department of Work and Pensions would be contacting claimants in receipt of Disability Living Allowance in relation to them making a claim for PIP.
- References in the report to tenants meant the number of households.
- The Poverty Strategy and Welfare Reform Implementation Group's Strategic Direction work were different workstreams and it was planned to look at how the Strategic Direction work on Welfare Reform could be integrated with the Poverty Strategy.
- No Council house tenants had been evicted in Sheffield as a result of the Under-Occupancy (Bedroom Tax) provisions.

6.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health, Nicola Rees, Maxine Stavrianakos and John Squire for their contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the report and responses to questions; and
- (c) requests that:-
 - (i) officers continue to present update reports to the Committee in their current form, so that Members could request further information on specific items either when they received the report or at the subsequent meeting; and
 - (ii) Members wishing to take up the offer to visit the teams working on the impacts of Welfare Reform contact Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer.

7. CALL-IN OF DECISION ON 'FUTURE OPTIONS FOR THE HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE'

(NOTE: At this point Councillor Josie Paszek left the room.)

7.1 The Committee considered the decision of the Cabinet made on 18th March 2015, relating to future options for the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service.

7.2 Signatories

The Lead Signatory to the call-in was Councillor Steve Ayris and the other signatories were Councillors Richard Shaw, Simon Clement-Jones, Penny Baker and Colin Ross.

7.3 Reasons for the Call-In

The signatories had confirmed that they wished to scrutinise the decision relating to future options for the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service, to ensure that such a significant decision was made in the best interests of tenants and leaseholders who used the service.

7.4 Attendees

- Councillor Harry Harpham (Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods)
- Janet Sharpe (Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services)

7.5 Councillor Steve Ayris addressed the Committee as Lead Signatory and emphasised the importance of the decision for customers.

7.6 In response, Janet Sharpe stated that customers were always an important part of the Housing, Repairs and Maintenance Service (the Service) with over 200,000 orders being processed each year. It was important to ensure that the service was clearly integrated and flexible so that duplication was avoided. She highlighted the need for customers to receive a good quality service and added that work had been undertaken with them in relation to the decision. An officer team had also undertaken a review of the service. She considered that the insourcing of the service provided the best opportunity and that any short-term risks were outweighed by the long-term benefits. Councillor Harry Harpham emphasised the importance of tenants and leaseholders in driving the service.

7.7 Questions from Members of the Committee

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

- A decision needed to be made at this stage on the future of the service due to the timescales for procurement and so that the detailed work in providing a better, stronger service could be undertaken. It would also run alongside the change being delivered in terms of Housing+.
- If the contract was retendered, there were risks involved and an insourced service would be more flexible to change. A strong management team would work with Kier to deliver the service. Furthermore, an insourced service would have a closer alignment with other Council services.
- The risks should not stop the Council moving to an insourced service and appropriate risk management would be put in place.

- Monitoring of the existing contract was undertaken by the client teams and any new structure would be delivered using a strict management and performance management framework. In addition, the new service would be part of the Council structure.
- The experience of other authorities going back to the market had been taken into consideration and that of other authorities making similar decisions to this one. The Association for Public Service Excellence's Performance Management Framework had also been taken into consideration, as had the experiences of those local authorities who had a successful in-house repairs and maintenance service. These together had provided an important understanding of costs and performance management.
- Officers had looked at the sampling in the Association for Public Service Excellence's report in relation to customer service ratings, with measures being reported for each operative. In addition, TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations) would apply to ensure a productive workforce and rigorous performance management standards would be adopted.
- Consultation had been carried out at Area Housing fora, through a partnership group focusing on repairs in connection with the Local Area Partnerships and through the tenant led Future of Council Housing Services Group. Statutory consultation with leaseholders would also be undertaken.
- A workstream was currently looking at customer access through the single call centre. Over the past few months far more calls had been identified and it was important to ensure that the right number of staff were available to take these calls and also to identify repeat calls. It was hoped to operate a dedicated housing and repairs call centre.
- At present, the Council call-handlers got the relevant information from the caller, so they could pass it to the right team. An appointment would then be made or there would be direct contact with Kier. It was acknowledged that the passing over process needed improvement.
- Officers now had more confidence in the information provided about the number of calls received at the Council call centre.
- The Investment and Repairs Partnership Group, which included tenants and leaseholders, worked on investment issues and reported back in the local areas. In areas where there was no Tenants' and Residents' Association, a broader consultation would take place and could involve the use of drop-in centres. The Council's Communication Bus could also be considered for use in the consultation process. In addition, the Future of Council Housing Group could be involved and the experience of other local authorities who had an insourced repairs and maintenance service could be considered. Consultation could be tailored to different areas of the City and social media

could also be used.

7.8 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report together with the comments made and responses provided;
- (b) notes the decision of the Cabinet made on 18th March 2015, in relation to the insourcing of the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service from 1st April 2017;
- (c) recommends that no action be taken in relation to the call-in decision; and
- (d) requests that:-
 - (i) a report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee to include full costings of holding a ballot of tenants and leaseholders on insourcing the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service, together with other fully costed consultation options; and
 - (ii) tenant representatives be invited to the meeting at which the above report is to be considered.

8. SOCIAL HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

(NOTE: At this point Councillor Josie Paszek re-joined the meeting.)

- 8.1 As a preliminary to this item, Vicki Barrow, a disabled Council tenant, informed the Committee of the extreme difficulties which she had had in getting Kier to undertake repairs to rotten wooden cladding at her property which was affecting her kitchen wall and floor tiles. She highlighted the difficulties experienced in contacting Kier, in that she had made approximately 70 phone calls and had only received a telephone call back on one occasion. Furthermore, she emphasised that the mould being caused by these problems had caused her asthma to deteriorate. In response, Janet Sharpe, Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, stated that she would make contact with Ms Barrow and also get one of her managers to contact her with a view to resolving these problems. She added that one of the reasons for the delay may be because a specialist damp-proofing company needed to be used.
- 8.2 The Committee then received a report of the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services which presented the Committee with information to enable it to consider the progress made on implementing the requirements of the contract for Repairs and Maintenance Services between the Council and Kier.
- 8.3 Janet Sharpe took the Committee through the report which highlighted key issues in the current arrangements.
- 8.4 Janet Sharpe also referred to the Casework Overview document which had been provided by Councillor Sarah Jane Smalley and which had been circulated to the

Committee. Councillor Smalley explained that the Casework Overview document contained examples of the number of visits made, related instances of poor service, things being missed and language issues and requested more information on performance management in relation to the quoted cases. In response, Janet Sharpe referred to the large volume of complaints received each year and the importance of the correct identification of the repairs required and having the right person to deal with them. She added that robust contract arrangements were in place, which included penalties for any breach. Improvement measures were in place with Kier and there was a commitment within that organisation to improvement.

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

- The annual housing stock survey involved a survey of the condition of 15/20% of the Council's housing stock.
- A 30 year asset management plan informed what was undertaken as planned maintenance. This would include items such as roof replacements.
- In order to minimise condensation, information was provided to tenants on insulation, high performance heating and ventilation. One of the main issues was drying clothes on heating and the use of extraction fans had been considered in some situations.
- Information on capital planned schemes was obtainable through the Local Area Housing Fora.
- It was acknowledged that leaks could create condensation, but it should be borne in mind that making properties airtight could also create problems.
- The making of a contribution towards the cost of extractor fans to combat condensation would be a policy decision. However, in the case of the reported complaint, it may be possible to see if the relevant Area Housing Manager could investigate this and consider whether it was a special case.
- It should be noted that the Council Complaints Procedure also applied to Kier.
- In some properties, extractor fans would be put in as part of a refurbishment, but there was a cost issue, so the design of windows was being looked at.
- Where a job was reported, it was attached to a property reference number and the client team would check to see if this was a new repair or an existing one. The jobs were monitored so that any trends could be identified.

8.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Janet Sharpe and Vicki Barrow for their contribution to the meeting;

- (b) notes the contents of the report and responses to questions; and
- (c) requests that:-
 - (i) reassurances be provided on how the reported issues relating to condensation, call handling and the number of repeat visits to properties are being addressed;
 - (ii) the questions raised in the Casework Overview document provided by Councillor Sarah Jane Smalley be addressed and circulated to the Committee; and
 - (iii) a further report on the Social Housing and Repairs Maintenance Contract be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

9. SHEFFIELD'S PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

- 9.1 This item was deferred to a future Committee meeting due to time constraints.

10. POLICE AND CRIME PANEL UPDATE

- 10.1 Councillor Roy Munn, who was a member of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel, reported on the Police and Crime Panel meeting which was held on 19th March 2015. At that meeting, Councillor Mazher Iqbal was appointed as Chair and there were no members of the public in attendance. The Panel also considered the renewed Police and Crime Plan 2013/17, the aim of which was that South Yorkshire would be and feel a safe place to live, learn and work. The Plan had three strategic priorities which were protecting vulnerable people, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, and enabling fair treatment, and was victim focused. There was also an emphasis on understanding vulnerability. The Panel decided not to appoint a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and also considered its Work Programme. In conclusion, Councillor Munn suggested that the Police and Crime Commissioner could be invited to a future meeting of the Committee.

- 10.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Councillor Roy Munn for his contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the information reported; and
- (c) requests that:-
 - (i) the Policy and Improvement Officer circulates a link to the Police and Crime Plan to Committee Members; and
 - (ii) consideration be given to the inclusion within the Committee's Work Programme of a themed meeting on Police and Community Safety which would include an update on the reorganisation of local policing.

11. WRITTEN RESPONSES TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

12. PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY

12.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Progress on Implementation of the Allocations Policy report.

13. REVIEW OF THE PARTNER RESOURCE ALLOCATION MEETING (PRAM)

13.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Review of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM).

14. RIGHT TO BUY UPDATE REPORT

14.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Right to Buy Update report.

15. COUNCILLOR CHRIS WELDON

15.1 Members noted that Councillor Chris Weldon was standing down as a Councillor in May and expressed their appreciation of the excellent work which he had undertaken as Chair of the Committee. They also extended their best wishes to him for the future.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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

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SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 20 May 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Steve Ayris, Penny Baker, David Barker, John Campbell, Sheila Constance, Tony Damms, Keith Davis, Tony Downing, Denise Fox, Aodan Marken, Roy Munn, Sioned-Mair Richards, Richard Shaw and Zoe Sykes

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Richard Crowther.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

2.1 RESOLVED: That Councillor Tony Damms be appointed Chair of the Committee and Councillor Steve Ayris be appointed Deputy Chair.

3. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

3.1 RESOLVED: That meetings of the Committee be held on a bi-monthly basis, on dates and times to be determined by the Chair.

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Report to Safer and Stronger Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 23rd July 2015

Report of: Janet Sharpe

Subject: Customer Engagement in the Housing Repairs Insourcing Project

Author of Report: Iain Allott, Strategic Project Lead, tel. 36495

Summary:

At its meeting in March 2015, at which the Housing Repairs Cabinet Report was called-in, Scrutiny Committee requested a report back on:

- Full costings of a ballot of tenants and leaseholders on the option to insource the repairs service
- Other options to get the views of tenants
- A number of general repairs issues
- The Committee also asked that tenant representatives be invited to the meeting.

In summary, the full financial cost of a ballot would be approx. £163,500 - this is an estimate based on a previous tenant ballot undertaken. This is not a cost which is factored into the current Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. The cost of undertaking a ballot in terms of the time it would take is approx. 8 - 9 months, which would have a severe negative impact on the Project. There is no legal requirement for us to undertake a ballot on this issue.

There is already a thorough and robust tenant engagement framework through which customers can contribute to shaping the repairs service. We know what customers want from the repairs service, and that these requirements are the same regardless of who delivers the service. We therefore believe that our resources should be focused on getting those elements right so that the service meets the ambitions of our customers.

The report also recommends that a Member Task and Finish Group be established to review the Housing Repairs Service.

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

Call-in of Cabinet decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The Committee is asked to consider the content, conclusions and recommendation within the report and provide views, comments and recommendations.

Background Papers:

N/A

Category of Report: OPEN

Report to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee: Customer Engagement in the Housing Repairs Insourcing Project

1. Introduction / Context

1.1. In response to the public questions raised by the Scrutiny Committee on 26th March 2015 regarding the Housing Repairs Cabinet Report, information was provided which described how tenants had been consulted on and kept informed of the Repairs Project. For reference / information, this response is attached as Appendix One.

1.2. Following this, the Committee requested a report back to their first meeting of 2015/16 with further information on:

- Full costings to hold a full ballot of tenants and leaseholders on bringing the repairs service in house
- Other options to get the views of tenants, again fully costed.
- The Committee also asked that tenant representatives be invited to the meeting.

1.3. This paper seeks to address these follow-on questions, and provide reassurance to the Committee around the level of tenant and leaseholder engagement / involvement in the project up to the point of transfer (March 2017), and beyond.

1.4. At their meeting on 26th March, the Scrutiny Committee also raised a number of more general questions about the current Housing Repairs contract. These were in relation to:

- Condensation
- Call centre issues
- Repeat visits to properties
- Communication
- Performance management / monitoring
- Programmed works information

The Committee asked for a report to be presented at a future Scrutiny meeting addressing these concerns, so this paper also responds to these items (in section 7).

2. Financial implications of a full tenant and leaseholder ballot

2.1. In 2012 the Council undertook a full ballot of tenants to determine their preference for the future management of the housing service (ie. continue with an Arms-Length-Management-Organisation or transfer it back into the Council). The costs given below are therefore based on the cost of undertaking that ballot as no other similar exercise has been undertaken since (**please note: These costs are only indicative based on the 2012 ballot, and further procurement and commissioning work would be needed to produce more definitive costs**):

Activity	Estimated cost
Procurement of an independent organisation to undertake the ballot	£25,000
Leaflets and other documents produced and distributed to all tenants to enable them to make an informed decision (including design work and	£96,000

distribution)	
Use of Customer Services to target calls and receive queries during ballot period	£5,500
Venues for events / meetings to promote the ballot and provide information	£4,000
'Consultation bus' to promote the ballot around the city	£4,500
Procurement of Independent Consultancy to oversee consultation process	£21,000
JC Decaux posters (60 sites city-wide)	£1,500
Staff hours for attending meetings, events, drop-in sessions, preparing the above materials, sourcing and contracting-managing the external professional services required, etc (based on 400 hours at middle of Grade 7)	£6,000
TOTAL	£163,500.00

2.2. There is no provision in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for this (with the potential exception of the staffing costs of £6000 – see below for more detail), and so work would have to be done to identify where this money would come from - potentially by top-slicing the budget for a particular maintenance / investment programme. This could mean, for example, the following would need to be foregone:

- 60 new central heating systems, **OR**
- 55 new kitchens, **OR**
- 80 new bathrooms, **OR**
- 60 new windows

2.3. If existing staff were used to support the ballot, there would be no additional cost for their time as they would be in existing HRA-funded posts. However, they would be unable to deliver some or all of their existing duties whilst supporting the ballot and so there would be a cost in terms of other work being delayed / not delivered.

2.4. If existing staffing resources couldn't be utilised to support the ballot (for example due to other business-critical service needs) then *additional* temporary resources would need to be recruited and so the staff costs would be an additional cost to the HRA.

2.5. Preparing for and running a full ballot would also be expensive in terms of the timescales. An *estimate* of the timetable for this is as follows:

Activity	Approx. time taken
Procurement of an independent consultancy to oversee the consultation process Procurement of an independent organisation to undertake the ballot	4 months
Full communication and promotion of the ballot to all tenant and leaseholders (would include producing and distributing publicity materials, holding public meetings and briefings, etc.)	4 months
Holding the ballot and collating the results	2 weeks
Total estimated time	8 - 9 months

2.6. Undertaking a significant consultation exercise such as this would need properly planning and executing - encouraging as wide a group of tenants and leaseholders to take part would be

critical to ensure maximum benefit for the high costs involved. The timescales estimated above are again based on the 2012 ballot.

- 2.7. Most if not all of the work on the Project would potentially need to be put on hold until the results of the ballot were known. This would mean a delay of *at least* 8 months (from the point at which the decision is made to undertake a ballot) in a project for which the timescales are already challenging. A delay of this length could not be sustained, and the deadline for achieving a successful transfer at the end of the current Kier contract would not be met.
- 2.8. A further decision would then be needed from Cabinet on how the service would be delivered from April 2017, taking into account the potential outcomes of the ballot, until longer-term arrangements were in place - putting the service at risk of interruption and instability.

3. Legal requirement for a ballot

- 3.1. The Council undertook a full ballot of tenants before setting up the ALMO (Sheffield Homes) in 2004. This was as a result of guidance on establishing ALMOs issued by the Secretary of State, which emphasised that “applications by an authority to establish an ALMO must demonstrate (by ballot or otherwise) that the proposed ALMO has the support of a majority of the tenants who would be affected”.
- 3.2. When the future of council housing management was being considered again in 2011 in preparation for the end of the Management Agreement with Sheffield Homes, the Secretary of State issued further guidance. This said that “The Government’s Communities and Local Government department expects the same level of consultation to be undertaken by Local Authorities to change housing management arrangements as took place when establishing the ALMO”. As a ballot had been held in Sheffield to establish the ALMO, a further ballot was therefore undertaken as part of the review of those arrangements.
- 3.3. The housing management functions covered by the ALMO agreement (and subsequently brought back in-house) were wide-ranging and had a significant effect on all tenants. Insourcing the housing repairs and maintenance service, even though it potentially affects every tenant, is basically a single function within the housing-management service and so the same consultation arrangements are not necessarily appropriate in this case. A full ballot would be an expensive and unnecessary drain on the HRA.

4. Other options for obtaining the views of tenants and leaseholders

- 4.1. Consulting and communicating with our customers is a fundamental part of any service change. Customers are pivotal to setting the service standards and determining how the service is designed. They have told us that what matters most to them in terms of the repairs service are the performance levels, customer service, ease of access, range of services provided and value-for-money of the service - regardless of who delivers it. These crucial elements need to continue to be our focus in the consultation we do over the coming months.

4.2. Existing customer engagement and governance framework

- 4.2.1. There is a strong and robust existing tenant engagement structure within the Council Housing Service, which gives all tenants the opportunity to be involved in shaping services and influencing decisions. Parts of this structure are citywide, some have a local focus;

some elements are service specific whilst others have a broader, more general remit. Attached in Appendix Two is a structure chart illustrating all the existing engagement channels for tenants and leaseholders.

4.2.2. In terms of the Repairs Service, we use feedback from a variety of sources to help inform service delivery and improvements. The key channels / forums for customer engagement in the Service are:

- **Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel (HANAP):** The Panel (which meets monthly) consists of tenant representatives from each council-housing Area of the city, as well as a leaseholder representative. It acts as a consultation, discussion and scrutiny forum for services delivered to tenants and leaseholders - and acts as a sounding board and source of advice for the Cabinet Member on relevant issues. It plays an active role in developing policies and strategies, and - as a key element of the housing service – the Repairs Service features frequently on the agenda.
- **City-wide Forum (CWF):** This bi-monthly Forum is attended by representatives of Tenant and Residents Associations (TARAs) across the city. It is used to consult on city-wide changes to housing services, inform customers of changes to local or national housing policies and to debate on issues through workshops to help inform decision making. Again, as a key service to customers, repairs-related issues often feature on the agenda.
- **Local Area Housing Forums (LAHFs):** Each Area has a bi-monthly LAHF, which is attended by representatives from local TARAs. Key issues affecting the Area – including those relating to the Repairs Service - are discussed here, and major issues are escalated up to HANAP.
- **Local Estates Services and Investment Forums (LESIFs):** Three of the six housing Areas have chosen to also have a bi-monthly LESIF, in addition to the LAHF – these are also attended by local TARA representatives. These look specifically at issues relating to Estates Services and Investment, and so repairs-related issues are a regular agenda item.
- **Leaseholder Forum:** This Forum represents the views of leaseholders, discusses and promotes the common interests of leaseholders and receives and responds to information relating to proposals affecting leaseholders.
- **Investment and Repairs Partnership Group (IRPG):** This Group (comprising of a number of representatives from all six LAHFs and the Leaseholder Forum) acts as the city-wide consultative forum on repairs policies, strategies, specifications and operational delivery arrangements. It helps to inform and advise on investment- and repairs-related decisions, monitors service improvement initiatives, scrutinises performance, considers issues raised in other forums (eg. LAHFs, Leaseholder Forum, etc) and provides feedback to HANAP. It also advises on how consultation should be carried out on investment and repairs activities to ensure effective tenant / leaseholder engagement.
- **Repairs Action Planning Group (RAPG):** This Group – consisting of tenants and leaseholders (alongside officers from both the Council and Kier) – undertake detailed monthly monitoring and analysis of performance and propose corrective actions to be taken to address any issues identified.
- **Customer insight information:** Regular customer surveys are carried out to obtain detailed feedback on the Repairs Service. Independent telephone surveys of customers who have received a repair (250 per month) are carried out by an external telephone-research organisation called ViewPoint. Face-to-face surveys are carried out by our

Maintenance Officers (approx. 130 per month) and a monthly postal survey is also distributed. This is all very valuable feedback – real first-hand experience of receiving the service – and is used to drive service improvements. It is compiled and presented in a regular Customer Service Report, which is discussed by the RAPG (above). Dedicated Repairs Customer Services meetings are also held to discuss performance and revise processes when required.

- **Regular customer publications:** 'InTouch' – a tenant and leaseholder magazine – is published quarterly and is distributed to all of our 44,000 customers. It includes articles on city-wide issues and key issues, and can also be used to seek feedback on service delivery / improvements. In addition, TARAs receive their own publication – called 'The Bridge' – which also covers city-wide issues and updates, but with more of a focus on tenant involvement and TARA-specific information. Repairs-related articles are included in both of these publications when relevant.

4.2.3. There are links and two-way information-sharing / updates between all of these channels – and IRPG and the RAPG both feed into the Housing Options Board within the overall SCC / Kier governance structure.

4.3. Additional repairs-specific consultation undertaken

4.3.1. Over the last 12 years tenants have been working closely with the Housing Service to develop customer service standards, which are now embedded in the Repairs Service. As described above, customers have the opportunity to discuss how performance can be improved and make suggestions based on their day to day experience of the service. These discussions are instrumental in ensuring that customers have a direct influence in the way that services are shaped and performance standards maintained.

4.3.2. During the 'It's Your Shout' consultation campaign undertaken as part of the Future of Council Housing Programme, a large number of tenants were consulted with to find out which aspects of the housing service are most important to them. The Repairs Service emerged as one of the most important areas to tenants, and so a dedicated tenant-led Service Design Project Group was established to do more detailed work on building the tenant vision for the future repairs service.

4.3.3. The vision developed and agreed by this Group has formed the basis for work now being done to develop the future Repairs Service. The Vision Statement in full is attached in Appendix Three.

4.3.4. More detailed work on how the future service should look is now being done. This work includes the development of an Operating Model, and a sub-group of IRPG has been working closely with Officers on this in recent months. This sub-group have considered key elements of the service, what works well and what could be improved – and has agreed some fundamental principles which will always be important whether the service is delivered by the Council or by an external contractor.

4.3.5. We are keen to ensure that the subgroup helping to shape the future service is fully representative, and HANAP were consulted at their meeting in May for their views on how this can best be achieved. They proposed that additional representatives – chosen from the HANAP membership – join the IRPG subgroup to strengthen its links with the wider tenant-governance structure. This has been agreed, and 3 additional members from HANAP have now been recruited onto the subgroup, including the leaseholder HANAP member.

4.3.6. This Group will not work in isolation, and will regularly feedback and consult with fellow tenants through IRPG and Local Area Housing Forums.

4.4. Customer engagement going forward

4.4.1. As can be seen from the information given above, we already have a wealth of knowledge about what tenants and leaseholders expect from the repairs service, and about their future vision for the Service. There is a very well-established and robust engagement and governance structure within the housing service, through which our customers have a multitude of opportunities to engage with, influence or simply keep up-to-date with improvements and issues relating to the Repairs Service.

4.4.2. In terms of the Repairs Insourcing Project we strongly believe that the best way to achieve maximum customer engagement in the Project is through effective use of the existing engagement framework. This will also be more cost-effective than trying to set-up further additional forums / channels – funding already exists for all of the channels listed above, and customers are familiar with their arrangements.

4.4.3. The project has already featured in a number of the above Forums / channels / publications. It has featured on the agendas of recent HANAP, LAHF, CWF and IRPG agendas - and an article was included in the June edition of InTouch which goes out to all tenants and leaseholders.

4.4.4. Based on this, a Communications Plan continues to be developed in line with the development of the implementation plan.

4.4.5. The Plan will be updated, if necessary, following feedback from the Scrutiny Committee and then shared with IRPG for their input. It will then be shared with the wider customer base at the appropriate time, via some of the channels listed above.

5. Conclusion

5.1. We know from the ongoing and long-standing consultation undertaken with tenants on the repairs service that being involved in shaping the service, good quality repairs, operatives being properly equipped with modern tools, high levels of customer-care and value-for-money are they key issues for customers.

5.2. These critical factors are the same regardless of *who* delivers the service. We therefore strongly believe that our efforts and resources should be focused on getting these elements right, and on transforming the service so that it meets the ambitions of our customers.

5.3. We can involve customers in achieving this through effective use of the robust engagement and governance structure which already exists. Investing a lot of time and money in running a full ballot on whether or not the service should be in-sourced would, in our opinion, be inappropriate and unnecessary.

6. Recommendation

6.1. That the Cabinet Member for Housing establishes a member Task and Finish Group to review the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service.

7. Response to Committee's queries on aspects of the current Housing Repairs contract

Condensation

7.1. During winter months the repairs service receives an increase in enquiries regarding damp and mould in customers' homes. Damp can be caused by leaks either from the roof or internal water pipes. However, the most common cause is condensation.

7.2. This is not an issue unique to Sheffield and we have recently revised our guidance to customers on how to prevent damp and mould in the home. The guidance leaflet is attached as Appendix 4 and is a useful source of information which explains the common causes and effects along with suggested remedies.

7.3. Our Repairs Manager was recently interviewed by the Sheffield Star which ran a positive story in March 2015 regarding how customers can prevent damp in their homes.

Repairs Call Centre

7.4. Some issues have been experienced by customers in relation to extended waiting times when reporting repairs. An action plan has been put in place to resolve this issue and call waiting times have improved.

7.5. The action plan includes the following-

- Further recruitment to ensure adequate resources are in place to deal with demand.
- Cross skilling of call handlers to allow more flexibility to deal with demand peaks.
- An Improved training programme for repairs call centre staff including access to a 'repairs knowledge library' to assist with first time resolutions to customers

Repeat visits

7.6. Some blocks are designed so that the main water / soil stack serves numerous properties, with kitchen sinks, bathrooms etc all connected to one system. Often water leaks are hard to trace as water can leak in one place and result in a leak to another part of the building or property. Officers have found this difficult to resolve at times and this does explain in part some of the 'multi visit' issues that we / customers have identified in Central Area.

7.7. Officers only generally use the 72 hours' notice process as a last resort, legal advice is to try everything in terms of contact that we can, prior to invoking the procedure. If water is pouring in we act regardless of any possible legal challenge later on.

7.8. When leaks are intermittent and suspected to be caused by a problem from another property, officers will try to either cold-call, or telephone to arrange definite appointments. Unfortunately they sometimes come across barriers. There are examples of customers who are away on holiday, or not resident at a property all of the time. When they return to the property they shower / bath and a leak occurs. The leak is reported so an officer

attends, but the customer has gone away again so we cannot access the property. This again could explain some of the repeat visit issues and frustrations from customers.

7.9. The following actions have been agreed to help address the issue of repeat visits:

- Kier plumbers and heating engineers are reminded of the need to work together where leaks are hard to identify and reach a conclusion or escalate.
- We will look to provide a named officer for customers to contact to avoid multi conversations when water leak issues are difficult to resolve.
- Vulnerability / language issues be considered in all cases and SCC / Kier officers to be reminded of this.

Communication

7.10. We have reviewed the cases presented at the March Scrutiny meeting and as a result have put in place a number of actions to improve how we communicate with customers:

- An escalation process will be put in place where multiple visits have failed to solve the leak issue. In essence, these cases will be 'red flagged' and management staff in both SCC and Kier will work together to agree the required action / approach and keep customers informed.
- We will look to provide a named officer where possible for customers to contact to avoid multiple conversations when water leak issues are difficult to resolve.
- Vulnerability / language issues will be considered in all cases and SCC officers will be reminded of this.
- Kier Operatives will be re-briefed on the use of interpretation services and the need to proactively identify vulnerability and report these issues back through supervisors.

Performance management / monitoring

7.11. We capture feedback about the repairs service from a variety of sources including independent satisfaction surveys from a company called Viewpoint, face to face surveys, neighbourhood surveys and complaints. The feedback we receive is scrutinised by Customers at monthly Action Planning Group meetings. Learning from this feedback is used to manage and develop the service, and a number of detailed action plans are in place around customer services, call centre and operational repairs delivery.

7.12. The current repairs contract with Kier includes a mechanism for applying performance penalties should Kier fail to hit key performance targets around timescales, quality standards and customer satisfaction.

7.13. All Kier operatives have recently agreed to a new code of conduct. Operatives are aware of the standards expected of them when delivering the service to customers.

Programmed works information

7.14. Information regarding future programme maintenance works can be found at the following link:

<https://www.sheffieldhomes.org.uk/myHome/ImprovingYourHome/HIPSearch.aspx>

7.15. This information is updated on a regular basis as new works programmes are agreed and planned.

Appendix One

Response to a public question raised by Scrutiny Committee on 26th March 2015:

“Which tenant groups have been consulted?” [in reference to the Housing Repairs Cabinet Report]

Tenants have been kept well-informed of progress on the Repairs Project. Updates have been given at February’s and April’s Local Area Housing Forums (LAHFs). All 56 TARAs across the city are invited to these, and so these meetings are representative of all tenants and leaseholders across the city and are a key channel through which the customer voice is heard. The project will be working closely with these, and other, forums over the next 2 years.

Updates have also been given at March’s Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel meeting and at meetings of the Investment and Repairs Partnership Group. An article will be included in the next edition of the InTouch magazine, which goes to all tenants and leaseholders.

Over the last 12 years tenants have been working closely with the Housing Service to develop customer service standards which are now embedded in the repairs service. As part of the existing repairs service governance arrangements, tenants and leaseholders can attend monthly Action Planning Groups. There are currently three groups whose role is to scrutinise performance and service standards across responsive repairs, heating mechanical and electrical and voids.

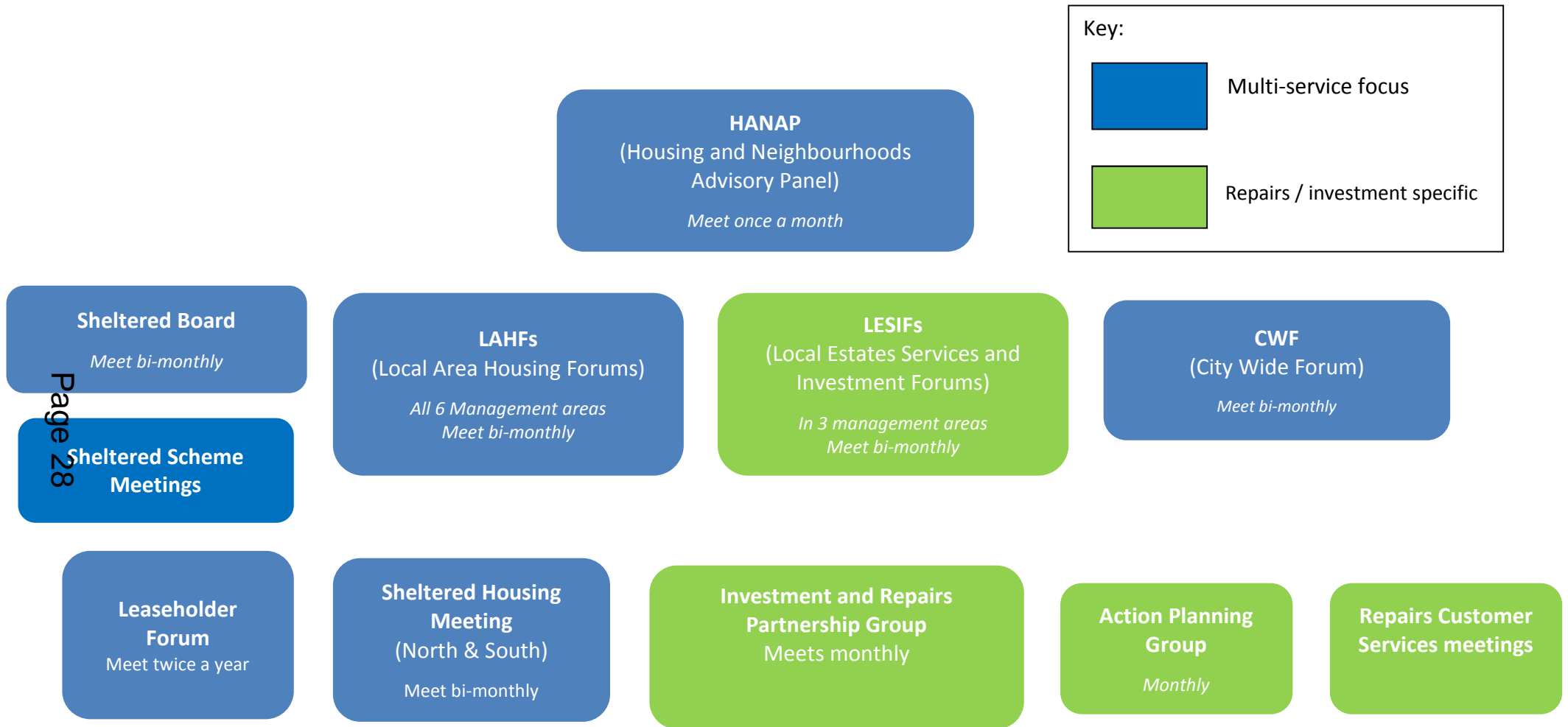
Customers have the opportunity to discuss how performance can be improved and make suggestions based on their day to day experience of the service. These Action Planning Groups are instrumental in ensuring that customers have a direct influence in the way that services are shaped and performance standards maintained.

During the ‘It’s Your Shout’ consultation campaign undertaken as part of the Future of Council Housing Programme, a large number of tenants were consulted with to find out which aspects of the housing service are most important to them. The Repairs Service emerged as one of the most important areas to tenants, and so a dedicated tenant-led Service Design Project Group was established to do more detailed work on building the tenant vision for the future repairs service.

The vision developed and agreed by this Group has formed the basis for work now being done with a sub-group of IRPG to develop a ‘Target Operating Model’ for the service. This Model will describe what the Service needs to do and how it needs to do it - and will help to ensure that the new repairs service achieves the agreed tenant vision.

What matters most to tenants is the performance, service standards and value-for-money of the repairs service - regardless of *who* delivers the service - and so these need to continue to be our focus in the consultation we do over the coming months.

Appendix Two – current structure of the Council Housing Engagement / Governance Structure



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Supplemented by:

- regular communications via tenant magazine 'In Touch'
- regular customer feedback via 'ViewPoint' telephone survey

Appendix Three

Well-Maintained Homes and Neighbourhoods Service Design Project Group: Vision Statement



- Investment and tenancy management services will be joined-up in a way which supports our tenants and leaseholders – particularly the most vulnerable.
- Tenants and leaseholders will play an integral part in shaping and designing investment standards in the future.
- The Council will help to tackle fuel poverty by ensuring that homes are energy efficient and have a modern and well-maintained heating system.
- Homes and neighbourhoods will be safe and secure. They will also be disability-friendly wherever possible.
- We will improve all of our communal areas and ensure they are well-maintained in the future.
- We will ensure that our neighbourhoods are safe, attractive and well-designed to promote long-term sustainability.
- There will be a good quality, modern responsive repairs service which has high standards of customer care and health and safety, and which provides value-for-money. The repairs call centre will be effective and efficient, and workmen will carry the right tools and materials.
- Some simple repair jobs will be dealt with where appropriate by staff in the Council Housing Service. We will provide advice, permission and support to any tenant wanting to make minor repairs and improvements to their home.
- The Handy-Person's Service will be extended to all elderly and vulnerable tenants in the city.
- There will be effective stock management, which considers all the relevant information to help inform sound investment decisions. We will work closely with our partners to plan and sequence work.
- Vacant properties will be brought up to a lettable standard quickly, including the gardens. We will advise new tenants when any missed Decent Homes work will be completed to their homes.

Appendix Four - Damp and Condensation Leaflet

Circulated as a separate attachment



Housing Services

Damp and condensation



Advice on how to prevent condensation



Dealing with condensation in your home

This leaflet explains what condensation is, why it occurs and why it is so important to minimise it in your home.

Contents

What is condensation?	3
What causes condensation?	3
When does it occur?	3
How much moisture do we produce at home?	4
Why does condensation need to be kept to a minimum?	4
How can I minimise mould and mildew?	5
Examples of areas most affected by condensation	5-6
The Dos and Don'ts of reducing condensation	7-8
The difference between damp and condensation	9
Contact us	11

What is condensation?

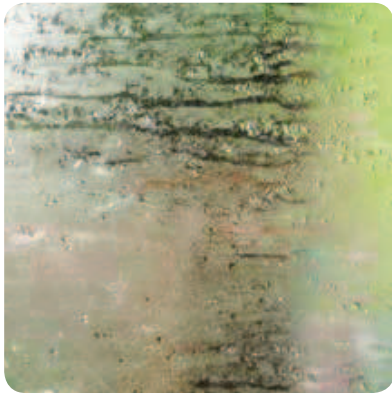
Condensation dampness is a condition that affects millions of homes in the UK and is particularly common in houses which are poorly heated and insulated and usually gets worse in winter.

What causes condensation?

There will always be moisture in the air, even if you can't see it. You will notice it when the mirror mists over after having a bath or when you can see your breath on a cold day. Warm air can hold more moisture than cold air, and so when warm air hits a cold surface, such as a wall or window, it is unable to keep holding all the moisture, and releases some in the form of tiny water droplets.

Where does it occur?

Condensation appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. As well as finding it on windows and walls, it will also appear in corners and in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. North facing walls are often affected the most, as they are usually the coldest.



Condensation on a window pane

How much moisture do we produce at home?

Even our breathing produces moisture. One person asleep adds ½ pint of water to the air overnight and twice as much when active during the day.

To give you an idea of how much extra water this could be in a day, here are a few examples:

- 2 people at home for 16 hours produces 3 pints
- A bath or shower produces 2 pints
- Drying clothes indoors produces 9 pints
- Cooking and use of a kettle produces 6 pints
- Washing dishes produces 2 pints
- Bottled gas heater (8 hours use) produces 4 pints

Why does condensation need to be kept to a minimum?

Dampness from condensation often causes the growth of black spot mould on walls and other cold surfaces such as tiles and sealants around sinks, baths and windows.

Black spot mould and mildew can also grow on furnishings, curtains and even clothes in wardrobes. It may first appear in corners or behind cupboards, but it can spread across entire walls and cause damage to the structure of the building.



Steam from a boiling pan

How can I minimise mould and mildew?

To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items:

- Allow air to circulate around them
- Try to keep gaps around large furniture
- Keep furniture away from external walls
- Ensure cupboards and drawers are not full as this will restrict air flow

Black spot mould on washable surfaces can be removed by wiping down with detergents or specialist mould removers. It can be washed out of fabrics, but may leave stains or spoil colours. If cleaning products are used ensure that you always adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for their safe use.

Examples of areas most affected by condensation

Is there black mould in cold corners?



Condensation is the main cause of black mould. More than half the homes in the UK suffer some condensation problems.

The mould grows on the coldest corners in the home. Outside corners and the corner of ceilings are most affected but with condensation mould can grow anywhere.

Is there black mould on your stirring boards?



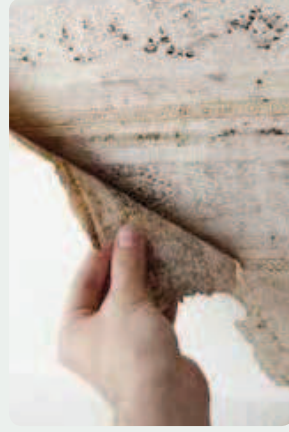
The photo shows a typical pattern of mould affecting the wall in the coldest areas. The shape of the black mould mirrors the temperature of the wall surface.

Does your furniture look like this?



This is a classic condensation symptom. Cold damp places are perfect for moulds and fungi to thrive. There is no known reason for this symptom other than condensation.

Move furniture away from cold outside walls where possible.



The DOs and DON'Ts of reducing condensation

All houses are affected by condensation. Certain household activities produce large amounts of moisture, but making small changes to the way you do things can greatly reduce the amount of moisture being produced.

DO

- Vent tumble dryers to the outside of your property, unless it is the self-condensing type
- Dry washing outdoors on a line, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or the fan on
- Avoid using paraffin and portable fuelless gas heaters
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when they are in use, even if there is an extractor fan
- Increase ventilation by keeping window and vents open
- Ensure there is a space between the back of wardrobes and the wall, and avoid positioning in front of exterior walls
- When cooking, open windows in the kitchen or use an extractor fan if fitted
- Cover saucepans while cooking and do not leave kettles boiling, thereby reducing steam
- Wipe down surfaces affected by condensation regularly, to prevent black spot mould growth. Black spot mould can be removed by washing the surface with a disinfectant
- Keep temperatures in all rooms above 15°C as this will reduce condensation forming on external walls
- Keep window vents open where and whenever possible
- Wipe and dry windows and window sills every morning to stop water evaporating onto your furnishings



DON'T

- Dry clothes on radiators
- Use portable heaters which burn paraffin or gas
- Close vents on the windows
- Place furniture or boxes against walls
- Block up air vents
- Keep the doors open from kitchens and bathrooms when cooking or washing
- Let the temperature drop in the home below a comfortable level or 15°C
- Get water on the floor in the bathroom when washing or showering

We can help

If you have a problem with mould growth you can contact us for advice and to arrange an inspection. Contact the Repairs Service Centre on **0114 273 5555** or call in at your nearest Area Housing Office or First Point.

The difference between damp and condensation

Damp occurs when a fault in the buildings' basic structure lets in water from the outside.

There are two types of damp - penetrating damp and rising damp.

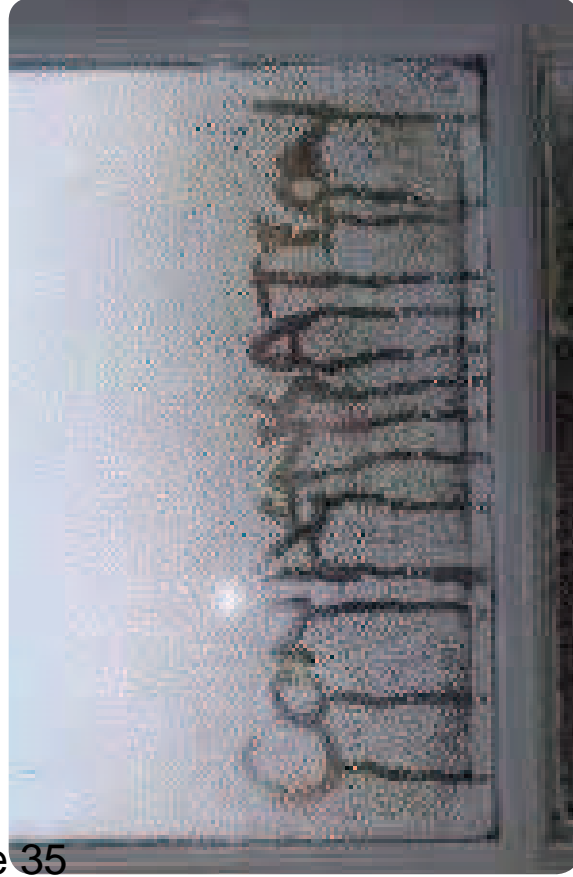
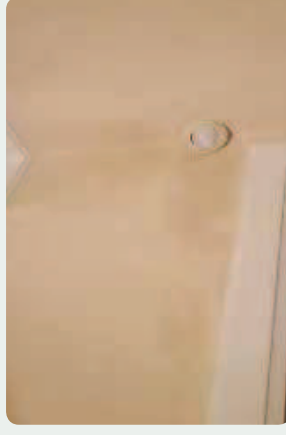
Penetrating damp occurs if water is coming in through the walls or roof (for example, under loose roof tiles) or through cracks in the external structure.

Penetrating damp shows as a wet patch and will not have any mould growth.

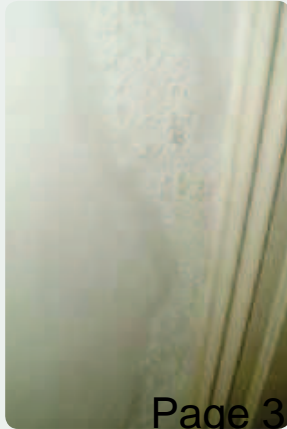
These pictures show water coming into the property where there is an external problem.



Penetrating damp shows as a wet patch and will not have any mould growth

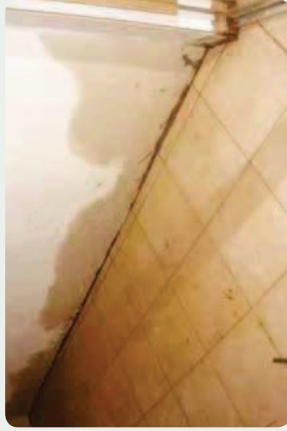


Rising damp occurs if there is if there is a problem with the damp proof course. This is a barrier built into floors and walls to stop moisture rising through the house from the ground. The damp a 'tide mark' on the walls that shows how high it has risen.



Rising damp is affecting the paint finish causing it to bubble.

If you think that you are suffering from either rising or penetrating damp, contact us for advise and an inspection. Contact the repairs service centre on **273 5555**, or call in person at any area housing office or first point. Rising damp is affecting the paint finish causing it to bubble.





Rising damp shows as a water mark rising up the wall from under the floor.

Contact Housing Services



Phone: Call Centres 0114 293 0000
Repairs 0114 205 3333
0114 273 5555



Online:
Enquiries: www.sheffield.gov.uk/contacthousing
Website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing
Follow us:   



Write: Council Housing Service
PO Box 483
M33 0DH



Visit Us: To find your local office please telephone us or alternatively you can visit our website and search for your local office using our interactive map.

Some calls may be monitored by Sheffield City Council and its partners for quality and training purposes.



Need help accessing our services?

A translation of this leaflet is automatically available in the languages below. It can also be made available in other languages on request.

Arabic

تتوفر نسخة مترجمة من هذه الكراسة باللغة العربية

Farsi

ترجمة ان برگچه در فارسی دستیاب است

Somali

Turjibaanka guub-yarahaan waxaa lagu heli karaa Soomaali

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Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

Report of: Janet Sharpe

Subject: The private rented sector in Sheffield

Author of Report: Michelle Houston, Service Manager
0114 2734680 or michelle.houston@sheffield.gov.uk

Summary:

Over half a million people live in Sheffield. Of those, around 75% of households are in the private sector; either as an owner occupier or a private renter.

The private rented sector has doubled in the past 10 years. It is now approaching the same size as our own council stock. With decreasing social housing and more people in housing need – we are more reliant on private landlords helping us to meet our statutory housing duties, and helping us to keep people safe and well in their homes.

We have more landlords and more properties. Whilst we have tremendous ambitions for the sector, like many other public services, we are managing this with extremely tight resources and limited service provision.

This report provides information about the size and condition of the private rented sector in Sheffield.

It also highlights the legal duties and powers we use to regulate the sector and encourage landlords to comply with their legal responsibilities.

A presentation was due to be delivered at two previous meetings¹, and a further request was that it was presented as a report instead. It was requested that the report included reference to the changing nature of the sector, and that it included an update on the Page Hall Multi Agency Team.

The report focusses on the private rented sector, but does make reference to the owner occupied and council housing sector for comparison and for context.

¹ 29 January 2015 meeting was cancelled due to bad weather, 26 March 2015 – meeting overran so item was not presented

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	Y
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The Committee are asked to provide their views and comments on the current and future regulation of the sector, with consideration of the resource and legislative frameworks described in the report.

Background Papers:

Background and more detailed reports are provided as Appendices

Category of Report: OPEN

Report of the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services

The Private Rented Sector in Sheffield

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Over half a million people live in Sheffield. Of those, around 75% of households are in the private sector; either as an owner occupier or a private renter.

1.2. The most dramatic change has been to the private rented sector. It has grown rapidly. Having doubled in the past 10 years, it is now approaching the same size as our own council stock. We have more landlords, more properties and whilst we have tremendous ambitions for the sector, are managing the extremely tight resources and limited service provision.

1.3. Yet we are even more reliant on good landlords to help us to meet housing need; whether it is a homeless family, an independent client with Learning Disabilities, or a professional moving to Sheffield for employment in our growing technological industries.

1.4. The Council is the enforcing and prosecuting authority for key statutory duties regarding the safety and management of owner occupied and private rented housing in the city. However, whilst the sector has doubled, the team responsible for management, regulation and enforcement in the sector reduced by 60% in 2011 to comply with savings requirements.

1.5. Despite the reductions, the team have performed well in delivering the services and regulation that was retained and have been successful in modernising practice and culture. Flagship schemes have been launched and staff have been called on to provide views and expertise to other local authorities, external bodies such as Shelter and Central Government.

1.6. The team generally provides a 'reactive' service only;

- Regulating standards in the city's 35,000² private rented houses
- Administration, inspection and regulation of the 1,800 licensable (larger) Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- Regulating the smaller HMOs, of which there are around 7,000
- Taking enquiries from tenants and other stakeholders about disrepair, providing advice and assistance, inspecting and enforcing where necessary
- Resolving Category 1 (serious) hazards in privately rented properties
- Advising on and preventing harassment and illegal eviction and prosecuting landlords as appropriate
- Enforcing standards on owners of problematic long term empty homes and developing procedures for bringing them back into use as occupied/affordable rented homes

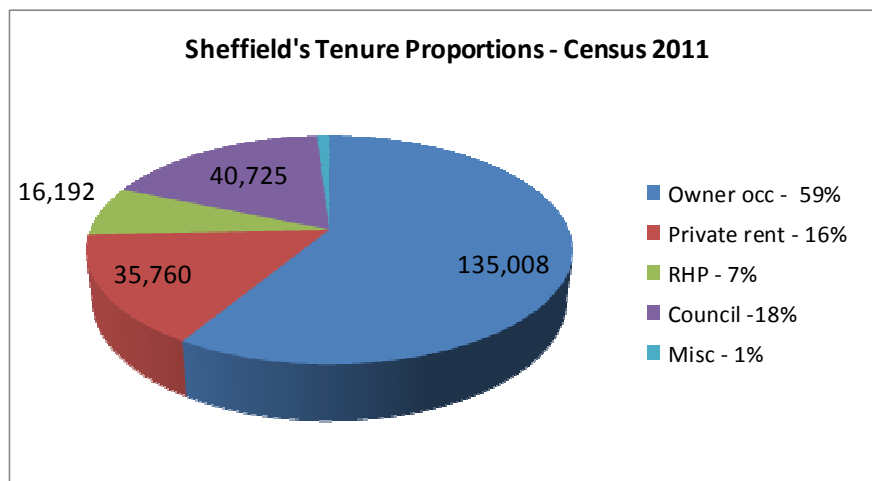
² A more accurate figure should be available following the Housing Market Assessment

- Taking enforcement/court action where landlords do not comply with legal Notices
- Administration, inspection and regulation of around 350 private rented properties in Page Hall which has been subject to a Selective Licensing scheme since April 2014.

2. MORE ABOUT THE SECTOR

2.1. The 2011 census data revealed that Sheffield experienced an above average increase of 7.7% in its population since the Census in 2001³. The economic downturn, low levels of private and social rent house building and growing numbers of people unable to access mortgages, leaves very little choice for many of Sheffield's residents. It is of no surprise then, that the Census also stated that there are now around 36,000 households in the city's private rented sector – making up around 16% of the city's housing stock.

2.2. The sector has almost doubled in size over the last 10 years. As a comparator, there are just under 41,000 households in council housing, so we can see how the private rented sector now provides a similar proportion to our own stock.



2.3 Our 2009 House Condition survey indicated that 26%, up to 9,000 homes in the private rented sector had a Category 1 hazard⁴. It is the highest percentage in terms of tenure. However, in terms of scale of problem, the largest problem by all means is in the owner occupied sector; where 21% were shown to have a Category 1 hazard which relates to around 32,000 properties in the city.

2.4 We eradicate Category 1 (serious) hazards in around 350 private rented properties per year. Our remedy rate is clearly a drop in the ocean compared with the figures and is not enough to have a significant impact on the safety of the private rented sector. Worryingly, we do not have any strategies or resources at all to address or remedy hazards in the owner occupied sector. So it is far from delivering a strategic response to eradicating the total proportion.

³ State of Sheffield 2013, Sheffield First Partnership publication

⁴ Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), is the method for risk assessing how serious a disrepair issue is. A Category 1 is likely to cause someone serious harm or even be fatal.

2.5 Some hazards which could potentially cause an accident or harm, are easily remedied (such as installing a handrail) and inspecting officers are confident that simply educating and raising awareness of these amongst landlords and tenants would improve the safety of homes across the city. This is therefore an encouragement and education programme as much as enforcement yet would provide excellent value for money in terms of prevention.

2.6 Despite the size and growth in the sector, the team's evidence and years of experience is that the vast majority of the sector is good or excellent. The student sector is good condition and professionally managed – more so because of the market competition. Many 'accidental' landlords seek help from us, and a significant number of landlords have been so through generations of families and have kept up with legislation required of them. Of the 2,000 complaints we get in a year – many are duplicates of the same landlord/agent or the same property which may suffer from a recurring defect such as mould.

2.7 But Sheffield is still facing significant inequalities between some neighbourhoods and client groups, so it is recognised that 'one size fits all' solutions are not the appropriate, legal or most effective options. It makes sense to tailor to different needs. This is in line with the Fairness commission report principles of "Those in greatest need should take priority" and "Prevention is better than cure"⁵

2.8 The map attached in **Appendix A** indicates the areas of the city, or groups of customers where private rented housing is dominant.

3 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE?

3.1 More and more people are living in the private rented sector. With less social housing and mortgages more difficult to acquire, private renting is the only sector available to a growing number of people.

3.2 Sheffield's owner occupied and private rented properties are getting older; many are less fit for purpose and they are increasingly the homes of the elderly, vulnerable, and health vulnerable.⁶

3.3 As a local authority, it is our duty to take account and make plans for all of the housing in our city. Yet there is extreme disparity in the resources we allocate to the private sector, compared with the investment into the social housing sector.

3.4 We have ambition ideas and an innovative vision for a future private sector that is in better condition, better managed, better educated and more capable of being a safe and suitable home for the sector's 400,000 Sheffield people.

4 THE KEY LEGISLATION IN USE

⁵ Sheffield Fairness Commission, Making Sheffield Fairer report 2012, Page 2

⁶ 21% of Sheffield households are aged 65 and over; Census 2011

- 4.1 The obvious difference to our work, is that we do not own the property we are taking action on. We are therefore required to work within many legal and policy regulations.
- 4.2 The occupants and owners are at best surprised, at worst very angry that the local authority becomes involved. So we are open to high levels of financial and legal challenge. The team must therefore be open and accountable in its decision making.
- 4.3 The **Housing Act 2004** introduced the majority of legislation now in use in the team.
- 4.4 The **HHSRS**⁷ is the risk assessment toolkit used to determine whether a defect is classed as a Category 1 (serious) hazard. We have the legal duty to address Category 1 hazards. Ultimately, landlords can be prosecuted for non-compliance.
- 4.5 **Mandatory licensing of larger Houses in Multiple Occupation** (HMOs, requires landlords/owners of larger HMOs to apply to the Council for a licence to 'run' their property. We set down various standards and conditions which the landlord must comply with. If the landlord doesn't comply, either by applying or meeting the conditions, the local authority can prosecute through the courts. Higher risk HMOs, generally properties that are for 5 people or more, on 3 floors or more are subject to mandatory licensing.
- 4.6 Outside of the Housing Act 2004, all Houses in Multiple Occupation, whether licensable or not, are required to comply with the **HMO Management Regulations**. Some of the requirements of the regulations are;
- i) To make sure that any garden belonging to the HMO is kept in a safe and tidy condition, including handrails, fences and boundary walls
 - ii) To ensure the good order, repair and cleanliness of the common parts of the house:
 - iii) To maintain the means of escape from fire, including any fire apparatus
- 4.7 Along with the mandatory licensing of HMOs, the Act provided the opportunity to introduce **discretionary licensing schemes** for other groups of private rented properties in a city/borough where the Local Authority had concerns about the properties or their management.
- 4.8 **Selective Licensing** is an initiative to tackle the poor condition and/or management of private rented housing. It imposes financial and practical responsibilities so it must be clearly demonstrated that the housing is a significant problem before it can be considered. This has been introduced in the Page Hall area of the city and a report of progress is included at **Appendix B**.

⁷ Housing Health and Safety Rating System

- 4.9 In addition to the Selective Licensing work; the **Page Hall Multi-Agency Team** was created to provide a locality based centre for the coordination of partner resources to prevent and tackle a wide range of issues, primarily anti-social behaviour and environmental concerns.
- 4.10 The team is based at Earl Marshall Youth Club in the heart of Page Hall and is made up of a council Neighbourhood Manager, police officers and colleagues from Sheffield Futures. Whilst not permanently located at Earl Marshall, the team has strong links with colleagues from EPS, Selective Licensing and MAST with joint working a key tool for tackling priority issues. Work is currently being undertaken to expand the team to help support and strengthen community engagement in the area, working with the pre-existing multi-agency team.
- 4.11 There is an appetite to consider Selective Licensing in other areas of the city too. Importantly, it must be pointed out that it is a 'housing' tool, and must not be mistaken for a way to deal with other issues such as particular tenants or communities, or environmental issues such as litter or crime and antisocial behaviour.
- 4.12 Government are clear that set criteria must be evidenced. A statutory consultation programme has to take place, and Councils are open to legal challenge, ultimately Judicial Review should they make a designation without proper regard to the criteria and the consultation. Importantly, the Council must be able to demonstrate that Selective Licensing is part of a much wider programme of regeneration and partnership working and that other methods of improving the properties and area have been attempted.
- 4.13 The sector in Sheffield is good condition and well managed on the whole, so could not legally be designated as a Selective Licensing area. This has been our stance since its introduction and is qualified by our lawyers. Recent case-law has also substantiated this. Moreover, the Government's changes to Selective Licensing regulations has further established that this is not a tool for borough wide use and must be explicitly used for 'problematic' areas of private rented housing.
- 4.14 A House of Commons briefing paper⁸, states;

"This instrument specifies conditions which if a local authority considers are satisfied in relation to an area, the local authority is able to designate the area as subject to selective licensing. Such a designation would have the effect of requiring landlords of private rented sector properties in the designated area to obtain a licence for their property.

The instrument sets out that for an area to be designated as subject to selective licensing, the area must contain a high proportion of properties in the private rented sector, in relation to the total housing accommodation in that area, and that these properties must be occupied under assured

⁸ SN/SP/4634, 17 March 2015, Wendy Wilson

tenancies or licenses to occupy. Further, it requires that one or more of the four additional sets of conditions must be satisfied.

These relate to poor property conditions, current or recent experience of large amounts of inward migration, areas which have a high level of deprivation, or areas which have high levels of crime. The conditions specified in this Order are in addition to the two sets of general conditions under which an area can already be designated as subject to selective licensing, as contained in section 80 of the Housing Act 2004 ("the 2004 Act").

4.15 **Additional Licensing** makes provision to designate all HMOs, whether high risk or not, as licensable. This would require the further administration of setting up another scheme, receiving and processing licences, monitoring and inspecting. Legislation allows for the reasonable costs associated with administering the scheme to be recovered through licensing costs. However, it is essential that this must not be confused with using licensing as a means of generating income which is not permitted. In fact, it could even place an additional financial burden on the authority as it uncovers other problems which must be addressed – not covered by the licence fee. This would therefore require additional resources rather than to provide it. Decisions to set up licensing schemes, along with the fees are challengeable through tribunals so must be open and auditable.

4.16 The criteria, which could not generally be met in Sheffield, are that before making a designation, a local authority must ;

consider that a significant proportion of the HMOs of that description in the area are managed sufficiently ineffectively...

consider whether there are any other courses of action available to them.that might provide an effective method of dealing with the problem...

that making the designation will significantly assist them to deal with the problem..."

4.17 Although there might be specific properties and/or landlords in certain areas that we are working with to improve conditions of the property and management, we are certainly not in a situation where it is a 'significant proportion'. We recognise that the majority of our landlords are professional and co-operative. There are of course a small minority where we have to intervene and enforce our legislative powers and these are spread across the city in various property types. The current enforcement report is being written and will be brought to the meeting for information.

4.18 To show a comparison, our officers have strong links with officers nationally and when Oxford introduced mandatory licensing, stated that their position is much different to ours. Oxford for example quoted at that time that their HMOs "generate more than 2,000 complaints a year out of their 7,000 properties...and about 70% of the properties are deemed unsafe." In comparison, we still get less than 200 complaints regarding HMOs in a year, which is a low figure in consideration of the 8,000 HMOs across the city.

- 4.19 A range of other tools are also available such as **Management Orders and Empty Dwelling Management Orders**. We have developed protocols for these, although we have yet needed to implement any. Experience across the country is that they are resource intensive to administer and are unwieldy in their legal requirements. We have therefore resolved many issues informally without having to resort to these. We will of course make use of them should we have to.
- 4.20 The **Letting and Managing Agents Redress** is new. From 1 October 2014, regulations come into force which provide that persons involved in letting agency work or/and property management work in the private rented sector, are required to be registered with an approved redress scheme.
- 4.21 The Council is the enforcing authority for this statutory requirement and is required to take enforcement action where it is aware a person engaged in letting agency or property management work is not registered with an approved redress scheme. A financial penalty of up to £5,000 can be levied by the authority for non-compliance.
- 4.22 We were one of the first authorities in the country to implement this and are also one of the first – if not the first to be successful in imposing penalties.
- 4.23 **Protection from Eviction and harassment** is a very serious criminal offence which is regulated by us. Our legal and policy officer responsible for this work area is nationally known and is the chair of ATRO⁹. He is regularly called on for his legal expertise and has been responsible for many successful prosecutions, including landlords being sent to prison on two occasions. He has provided the team with a wealth of knowledge and training for other team members and external organisations such as South Yorkshire Police.
- 4.24 The **Town and Country Planning Acts, Building Acts and Environmental Health Acts** are also used regularly especially in terms of the enforcement of problematic empty homes. The city has properties that have been empty for up to 20 years. Many of us find it odd that a property owner can leave their house to fall into disrepair and structural failure – yet this is happening citywide. Our enforcement officer has for many years delivered new methods to investigate ownership and bring back into use. Most recently he has influenced our legal services to use a piece of legislation for the first time, which if successful will again be the first use of its type in the country.
- 4.25 This section therefore shows just some of the different tools available and in use across the team. It also shows the high levels of knowledge and legal support that is needed to regulate the sector.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council must continue to fund those activities that are mandatory, to prevent the Council being at risk of serious legal, financial and reputational damage.

⁹ Association of Tenancy Relations Officers

5.2 Any new initiatives such as exploring further licensing, or developing more flagship schemes would require initial investment before any potential income or fees could be collected.

5.3 Any future licensing schemes would also require one off costs, which could not be funded through licence fees, for preparation, data collection and reporting and consultation. These costs would be proportionate depending on the size of the area.

6 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The existing resources to a degree, deliver the current reactive service. Any future schemes, consultation or proposals would require additional staffing and they must be skilled in the work area.

6.2 However – it should also be recognised that of the new roles, some will be specialist that require certain skills or qualifications, so it should be accepted that these may require external recruitment campaigns to attract quality staff with the experience needed.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 As previously mentioned in the report – our work area is highly legislative. This brings with it a high level of risk and must therefore be registered and mitigated. Members are reminded to consider these legal restrictions.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 The Council has legal duties to take account of and enforce statutory conditions in all of its housing. It has also made a clear commitment in its new Corporate Plan to improving standards in the city's private housing sector.

8.2 We must not underestimate the massive impact that people's housing has on their general health and wellbeing. We must address and plan for this as we are faced with thousands of people whose homes are no longer fit for them to live in – or are causing actual harm to them.

8.3 We are lucky in Sheffield to have a majority of landlords in the city who are responsible and professional. But those that aren't need serious legal enforcement by the regulatory authority. So far, we have only touched the surface and are keen to drive out landlords that do not meet our expectations. We want them to comply, or move out. We want them to know we will no longer tolerate irresponsible unsafe landlords in our city.

8.4 Importantly, we must not miss an opportunity to work alongside our council housing colleagues to develop more holistic approaches to managing housing in the city, whilst supporting those residents that need it.

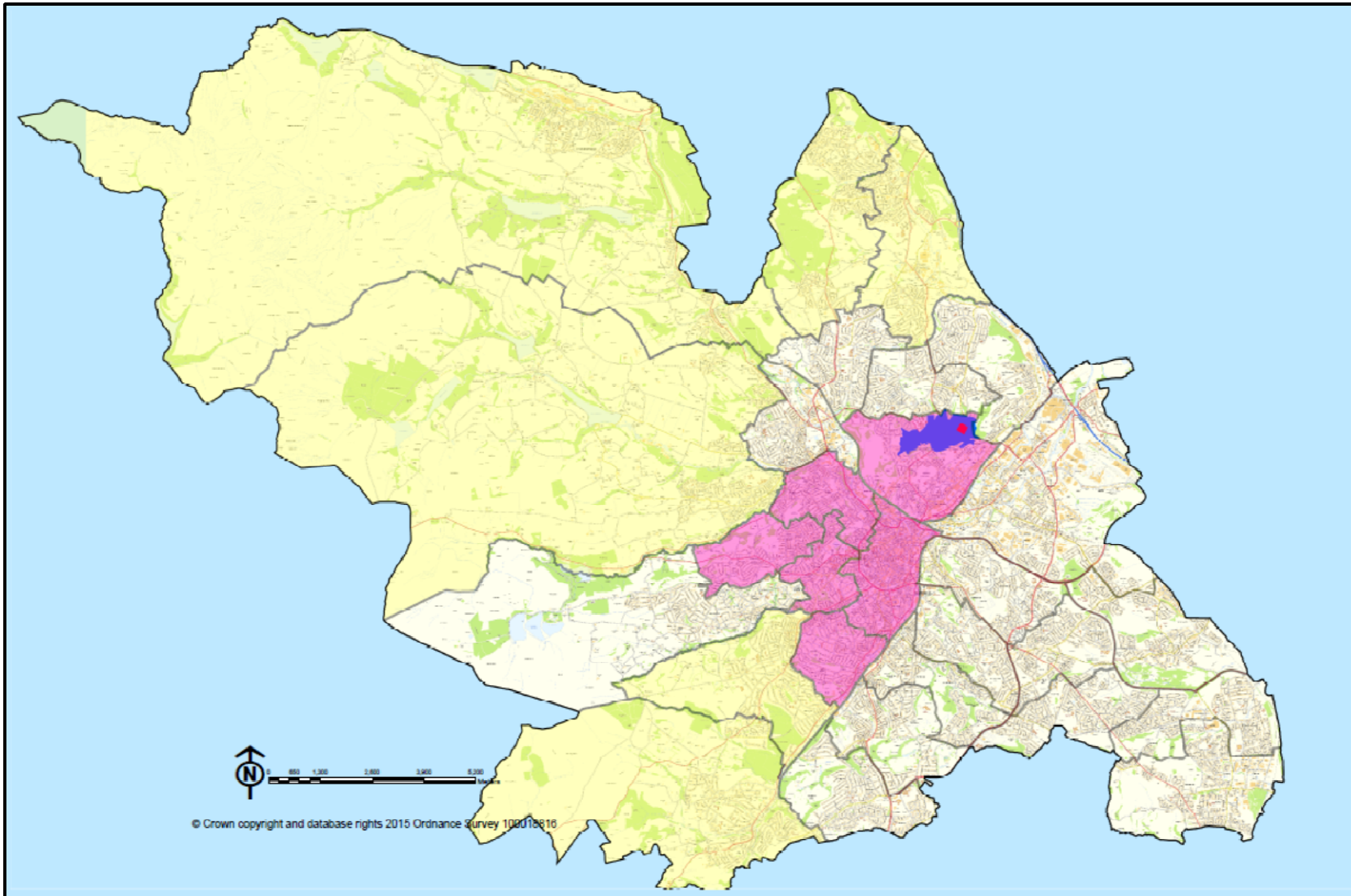
8.5 Working more proactively, and therefore identifying and addressing issues earlier, will also mean that many households are prevented from escalating into more complex needs, thereby reducing the demand on other Council services for more costly interventions and support.

8.6 The team are ambitious in its goals. We do not want to miss the opportunity to work and learn with our council housing colleagues to deliver a strategy for the whole of the city's housing. We want our Council to be the leading authority in new initiatives to manage the sector. We are absolutely committed to this challenge, so that people will choose and be confident in Sheffield's private sector.

9 Recommendation

9.1 The Committee is asked to provide views and comments about the current and future regulation of the sector

9.2 The Committee are also asked to consider and communicate the resource and legislative restrictions.



Sheffield City Council

Private Housing Standards

June 2015

PAGE HALL SELECTIVE LICENSING - ONE YEAR ON
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1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. To record the progress made regarding the first year of the Page Hall Selective Licensing Scheme.
- 1.2. To look back at the reasons for considering Selective Licensing, the decision making process, the progress made so far, lessons learned and the next steps that are going to be taken.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Selective Licensing legislation was introduced in the Housing Act 2004. The Act provides for Councils to introduce; or 'designate' a scheme where there are significant problems in a neighbourhood or borough associated with problematic private rented housing.
- 2.2. To introduce a scheme, there are various requirements that must be met for it to be legitimate. These designations can be legally challenged and some local authorities have been ordered by the courts to quash their schemes. However, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has recently won an appeal in the High Courts to recommence theirs, overturning an initial challenge and victory by landlords.
- 2.3. The Government has published guidance about Selective Licensing, which sets out the criteria you must meet, and to ensure the scheme works alongside other strategies which results in a community wide solution. It is therefore essential that councils only propose a Selective Licensing scheme where they are confident they have attempted other options first, and that it would achieve a positive outcome over the five year life of the scheme.

3. Selective Licensing in Page Hall

- 3.1. We have been considering the option of a Selective Licensing Scheme in Page Hall for many years.
- 3.2. Since around 2009, referrals coming into the team showed an escalation of issues in that particular part of the city regarding poor condition housing, absent landlords, irresponsible letting and overcrowding.

- 3.3. Despite the escalation of problems, we were committed to working on voluntary measures in that area, to encourage landlords to co-operate with us and take advice about how to improve the condition and management of their properties. Dedicated project staff worked with housing inspectors and colleagues in children's services, waste management, Pakistan Advice Centre as well as police officers and residents.
- 3.4. Some wards in the East of the city have traditionally been areas of housing market weakness. There has been significant investment of regeneration funding over the years, but there continues to be high levels of older terraced housing. Some of these streets have up to 50% of homes that are privately rented. Economic migrants have been attracted to these areas because of the accessibility of the private rented sector, initial low rents and because they are joining a community where there are existing migrants as a support network.
- 3.5. For some years, the Council had invested resources in the area to respond to the impact the migration has had on the existing community and residents. In the main, the differences in lifestyle and culture have provided problems for integration and cohesion. Along with language and translation issues there is a general suspicion of public authority figures due to the migrants' previous experiences which provided an additional barrier.
- 3.6. The only sector the migrants have access to when they arrive in the country is the private rented sector. Some landlords have seen this as an opportunity to let poorer quality houses without the appropriate management. Tenancy obligations have probably not been explained properly along with the expectations about living in an established community. However, it must also be pointed out that a great deal of issues the housing team have dealt with are a result of tenant damage/neglect and overcrowding which the landlord was not necessarily in direct control of.
- 3.7. More general issues are concentrated around children missing from education, low level Anti-social Behaviour; large groups of people congregating in streets which existing residents find intimidating and resulted in a police Section 30 Dispersal Order. There was also a significant environmental problem with dumping of rubbish, fly-tipping and instances of waste in backyards and the streets themselves. This had resulted in Public Health issues such as Hepatitis, Tuberculosis and diphtheria.
- 3.8. Exhibitions, training sessions, door knocking, information leaflets and advice surgeries were targeted at landlords. However, over a number of years of work, it was clear that landlords would not come forward to work with us voluntarily, and did not accept their role in improving problems in the neighbourhood.
- 3.9. Our housing inspectors spent increasing amounts of time in the area, and working with other council colleagues and agencies such as the Police. Over time it produced more evidence that there was irresponsible letting taking place and landlords were not actively managing the properties and tenancies. Our work was funded by the European Housing Market Renewal programme, then by the Migration Impact Fund from central government. By the time the funding ended in 2011/12, it was clear that a more rigorous approach was needed.

4. Data collection and consultation

- 4.1. In late 2012, early 2013, officers began to collect and collate the data available for the area; such as House Prices, deprivation indices, numbers of referrals to the PHS team and number of harassment and illegal eviction complaints. Door knocking took place to try and gain information about tenants and landlords, and whether the house was owner occupied or private rented. This gave us an initial database of information to work from.
- 4.2. Detailed legal advice was taken and it was agreed that the data collected did show that the area met the Government eligibility criteria, especially since we had done so much proactive work in the area beforehand.
- 4.3. In the weeks up to the consultation, following Member representations, the proposed area was extended. This ensured that any final designation would have captured the views of specific and surrounding properties.
- 4.4. A 10 week statutory consultation programme ran between July and September 2013, which included tenants, residents, landlords, local businesses and other stakeholders in the area.
- 4.5. The consultation process was extensive and a significant amount of information was presented and collected.
- 4.6. We were however shocked at the animosity shown by landlords. Verbal and physical aggression was encountered and officers faced regular abuse. This was clearly a concern to officers, especially when they were in the process of considering whether these landlords had the professionalism and capability to manage such a large area of private rented housing.

5. Implementation and progress

- 5.1. On 15 January 2014, the Page Hall Selective Licensing Scheme was approved by the Council's Cabinet, to come into force on 22 April 2014. The designation covered approximately 650 homes, of which around 350 were privately rented.
- 5.2. We had also been successful in a funding bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government for resources to fund additional enforcement staff as part of their campaign to tackle rogue landlords. This has been a tremendous boost to the running of the scheme and allowed for a tremendous amount of data collection and door knocking to take place before the scheme went live.
- 5.3. The scheme covered the 'core' streets which caused the most problems. In the remaining area of the consultation, a voluntary scheme – suggested by landlords was recommended to Cabinet and this was also approved on 15 January 2014. The focus for the Council was of course on the formal designation.
- 5.4. The lead in period of three months is a statutory requirement, and this included advertising the in-coming scheme and posting legal Notices in the press. We also wrote to landlords about the need to licence, and to supply the necessary paperwork to make an application. It became clear over the following months

that a lot of details we held were inaccurate, and owners had not informed Council Tax and Land Registry about changes to ownership or their addresses.

- 5.5. Following the decision to implement the scheme, meetings were held with landlords to explain the licence conditions and standards. Officers' experience was that much time in these meetings was taken by landlords using the meetings to make further representations raising objections about the need for licensing, despite the consultation process having finished and the scheme having become council policy. Good quality feedback was gained at the meetings and some of the licensing standards were subsequently revised from that feedback.
- 5.6. Applications were slow in arriving as expected but by the deadline date of 22 April, we had 207 applications.
- 5.7. There were also 85 applications for exemption from licensing; such as being occupied by close family members and empty properties.
- 5.8. However, a large majority of the applications were not complete, and a great deal of resource was spent on chasing missing or investigating inaccurate information. For example, gas certificates were out of date, or applicant names were not the same as those on Land Registry or our existing records.
- 5.9. Once investigated, it was found that only 53 of the 85 exemptions claimed were legitimate; the others being made to apply the higher fee and/or prosecuted.
- 5.10. One year on, the number of applications had risen to 276; some of those applications being made through actual or the threat of prosecution action.

6. The licensing process

6.1. Application

- 6.1.1. The licensing process is not straightforward. We are required to ask for and check a number of documents relating to the property and its ownership. Whilst it is complex – this has been a positive experience as it has uncovered many details and inaccuracies which we have been able to follow up on. It has also helped landlords to gain the basic certificates and documents necessary to comply with certain responsibilities.
- 6.1.2. These details accompanied the application form and the licence fee. For many applications, this took some months to complete as significant applications were not complete. In order for it to become valid, we must have all the information requested. It was increasingly clear that landlords were not compliant even at this early stage. For example, we found that less than half of the properties had a valid gas safety certificate at the time of application. This is symptomatic of the poor management of a lot of properties in the area. A lack of something so basic, yet so important, justified our concerns.

6.2. Fit and Proper

- 6.2.1. When everything has been received, it becomes a 'live' application. The next step is for a 'Fit and Proper' assessment to be carried out. This is set down in law and allows the Council to consider whether the landlord/owner is able to carry out his duties and obligations properly. We consider any criminal convictions, the dealings we've had with the landlord before, and also whether their management arrangements are satisfactory.
- 6.2.2. There is onus on the council to be satisfied about the status and management arrangements before a licence can be issued.
- 6.2.3. Over the last year, we have brought in 17 landlords and agents for interview to share our concerns and give them their opportunity to correct any information we have. It also provides the opportunity to form a dialogue with us. This improves communications, so that landlords can seek advice from us and we can achieve improvements more easily and quickly. All beneficial for the tenants.
- 6.2.4. A refusal of Fit and Proper status means they are not allowed to manage a house in the Selective licensing area. It would also affect those that have a licensable House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), or a larger House in Multiple Occupation.
- 6.2.5. Pending a formal refusal; landlords/owners are given an opportunity to engage someone else to manage the house on their behalf. If they do not – the council can apply to take over the management and take a management fee from the rent.
- 6.2.6. The Fit and Proper process has a significant impact as one of the main reasons for introducing Selective Licensing is to make sure the landlords are responsible and willing to face up to their legal and moral obligations.
- 6.2.7. We have already made the decision that 5 individual landlords and two Letting/Managing agents operating in the area are not suitable and have given the owners the option of managing the properties themselves or finding an alternative manager or agent.
- 6.2.8.** A summary of the findings and actions relating to the assessment of fit and proper status are detailed in **Appendix C**

6.3. Draft and final licences

- 6.3.1. Legally, we must issue a 'draft' licence first. It must go to all parties that have an interest in the house; such as owners, mortgage companies and managing agents.
- 6.3.2. The licence has schedules which list the standards, such as for fire detection, as well as the conditions, such as numbers permitted to prevent overcrowding.
- 6.3.3. There is much more emphasis on tenancy management, as we identified this as one of the determinants of introducing the scheme.

6.3.4. We must give them a month to consider the standards and conditions on the licence – and they are able to make representations to us if there are any inaccuracies, or we have scheduled not appropriate for that property.

6.3.5. When we have taken into account any representations made, a full and final licence can be issued.

7. Licence standards and conditions

7.1. It was important to make sure the licence conditions were appropriate and enforceable, and this involved taking legal advice about some of the standards and conditions initially proposed. We already have significant experience in managing licensing for large shared houses in Sheffield and wanted to make sure that we were being consistent.

7.2. It was concluded that there was a slight difference between the way the HMO Licensing and the Selective Licensing rules were framed. Following this advice we revised the licence conditions to match the legal advice.

7.3. Licences are issued with varying schedules and timescales:

7.3.1. The management standards are a mixture of ongoing responsibilities applicable from the issue of the licence and responsibilities relating to new lettings after the issue of the licence.

7.3.2. The overcrowding standards give a 12 month obligation to deal with any existing overcrowding. New lettings are to comply with the stricter licensing standards for the area. There is a continuing obligation for landlords to inform us of any increases in occupation and they must stipulate the maximum occupancy on the tenancy agreement.

7.3.3. Some of the property standards affect only new lettings. There is a requirement to do works in 2 weeks where there are serious safety issues, 3 months for some other safety issues and a requirement to complete work in 12 months for other work.

7.4. Landlords must also attend a training course within 6 months from issue of the licence. Landlords who have attended suitable training already are exempt. But those who seek exemption simply because of the time they have been a landlord are made to attend. Experience does not offset legal knowledge.

7.5. Many landlords attended training ahead of the issue of licences. We have completed 5 courses already and 3 more are planned in May, June and August 2015. So far 145 landlords have already attended training. We will determine the need for more cases on completion of these three courses.

7.6. The training sessions were seen by some landlords as an opportunity voice further opposition to selective licensing. Despite that, the feedback has been good, with an 88% satisfaction rate.

7.7. In addition to the licence condition schedules there are two more sections issued with the licence:

7.7.1. There are items that we can enforce straight away through service of a legal notice under the Housing Act 2004. As part of this; landlords have been issued with a 3 months requirement for the fire escape works and 12 months for other matters.

7.7.2. In addition there is a section detailing work that we would like to be carried out for the success of the area, but which we cannot insist upon or enforce. For example, we have asked that landlords provide appliances that have at least an 'A' rating to contribute towards lower running costs and energy efficiency. We have found some landlords to be very positive about this approach as they too are keen to raise the market value and appearance of the neighbourhood. These are the landlords that have shown responsibility and a commitment to providing a good quality housing and management service. Indeed, they have been buying up more properties that have become empty and involving our housing inspectors at the very start of their improvement works.

8. Outstanding licence applications

8.1. There are complex issues with 25 incomplete or outstanding licence applications. These are subject to ongoing in-depth investigations; such as Fit and Proper or establishing correct ownership of the property. It has of course been more efficient to deal with the straightforward cases first.

8.2. A summary of the current position is included as **Appendix A** to this report

9. Failure to apply for a licence

9.1. Some landlords failed to apply for their licence, a number refused to supply all the required information and two landlords, owning multiple properties wanted to pay by instalments – which was not allowed by the scheme. Failure to make a valid application for a licence is a criminal offence.

9.2. We have learned a great deal from our early experiences in court. One of the main findings was that Magistrates and Judges had very little knowledge of Selective Licensing. Although the legislation came into force through the Housing Act 2004, this is the first designation in Sheffield¹⁰.

9.3. We also found that some landlords did not respond at all until they received the Court Summons. Perhaps there was a lack of understanding by the landlord of the seriousness of the offence. It could also suggest a symptomatic response to people who do not see themselves as 'landlords' in a business sense.

9.4. Once in court, the landlord may give us the information or explanation we needed. In these cases it is appropriate to withdraw the case, which we have done on a number of occasions. This demonstrates that we are acting

¹⁰ This designation covers only 1% of the private rented stock in Sheffield.

reasonably and ensuring that landlords have full opportunity to explain their actions to us. It also shows that any cases we do pursue have had serious consideration beforehand and are in the public interest to pursue.

9.5. We are confident that as time goes on, strong messages will go to landlords and the Courts; that the council is doing everything to help landlords meet their obligations. But where they don't – we are committed to taking the appropriate legal action. Officers and colleagues are working hard to increase Magistrates' and Judges' knowledge of Selective Licensing.

9.6. Seventeen cases have been or are in the court system so far. A table of the prosecutions is included as **Appendix B** to this report. Current ones are anonymised for the landlord's protection. Now that licences have been issued – further prosecutions will be about failure to comply with standards such as fire detection, or conditions such as overcrowding.

9.7. Whilst each case has to be considered on its own merits, a continued failure to licence or breach of other property law, is likely to result in a decision to that the owner is unsuitable to hold a licence.

10. Ongoing Actions

10.1. In the first stages of the process, it has been necessary to focus on assessing and processing applications and investigating and taking action on those who have not applied for a licence. This part was inevitably the administrative side of the paperwork and data recording. It also began to discourage those landlords who know that they will not be able to meet the standards, from operating in the area.

10.2. Licences and draft licences are still being issued, and work to deal with the outstanding applications is currently taking place.

10.3. Enforcement officers are continuing investigations; involving a visit to those remaining properties where information provided needs clarification.

10.4. A new programme of inspections has been drawn up to verify whether the licence conditions that required action in 3 months have been completed, and to check whether the fire escape requirements have been carried out.

10.5. Court papers are being collated for ongoing prosecutions.

11. Tenancy Reference service

11.1. One of the mandatory conditions on the licence is for landlords to require references for all new tenancies. We have developed a comprehensive tenancy reference service for those unable to supply references.

11.2. Tenancy Relations Officers run through the rights and obligations with the landlord and the tenant/s. Where the officers are satisfied that all parties are

clear on what is required of them, they become the authorised referee. This does not act as a guarantor for rent – but meets the mandatory licence condition.

11.3. There has only been one request for this service. This is of concern as we have no doubts that many new tenancies have been created since the introduction of Selective Licensing, and that many new arrivals will not have provided tenancy references.

11.4. Again it suggests that some landlords are still not taking their tenancy management responsibilities seriously. Our Tenancy Relations Officers have developed a good quality tenancy agreement template which landlords are able to use, all to aid their management of the tenancy and it is important that the explanation and use of agreements is enforced. This element is part of the next programme of investigation visits.

12. Partner referrals

12.1. Selective Licensing has already enabled us to build excellent relationships with the UK Revenue Protection Agency (UKRPA) because we have referred cases where tampering or bypassing of gas and electricity meters was found or suspected. Already, some meters have been replaced and some have even been removed – often for safety reasons.

12.2. Selective Licensing has forged closer working with Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST) where there are children or vulnerable occupants. We have carried out several briefing sessions to MAST and other teams to expand knowledge about our role and the purposes of Selective Licensing. They have been very supportive of our work and its value to them in highlighting issues of concern. Many of these issues may well have not come to light, or not have come to light so early, were it not for the involvement of Private Housing Standards officers in the area.

13. Other legal action

13.1. Through our officers' activities and property inspections in the area, enforcement activity continues. Notices have been served to address situations where high risk hazards in the home have been found, matters likely to be a risk to the health of the occupants are present, and to prohibit the use of bedrooms which are undersized or inadequately adapted. Over 700 full or partial inspections have been carried out of the rented properties in the area.

13.2. Early visible improvement resulted from us serving a number of 'gutter Notices'. In all but one of cases the landlord has fully carried out the works required and the other has not expired yet. This has improved the property and

also the quality of home for the tenant, as defective guttering is a major cause of water penetrating into the house and causing damp and mould – a severe health risk especially for those with asthma or other breathing problems. It is also likely to affect neighbouring properties so we take this seriously especially as owner occupiers may be affected too.

13.3. Landlords' compliance with all Notices is being closely monitored in addition to those works required under the licence. We are operating a zero tolerance approach in the area now as landlords have been given every opportunity to work positively with us. Failure to comply is resulting in proceedings against the owners or agents. Where repairs are not being done, we are using our legal powers to do them using our own contractors and charging the owners. This increases the costs to the owners but is again necessary where they are failing to comply.

13.4. Aside from assessing, processing and issuing licences, the key effects at this early stage of licensing are around the imposition of safety standards in properties which will be ongoing over the next year or so. Many landlords have been forced to obtain gas safety certificates for the first time as applications could not be made without them. The effects of raising these safety standards are unlikely to be very visible or obvious in the early days of licensing since the intended benefit is to improve property and management conditions – and ultimately regulate the tenancies on a much stricter basis.

14. Lessons learned

14.1. A scheme of this nature obviously provides many learning opportunities. We were always satisfied that our evidence was strong, and this is important when facing a legal challenge. We also now have strong processes in place to regulate the scheme – but these were not all complete by the 'go live' date. So, any future consultation and implementation of licensing will incorporate the things that went well, in addition to the things we learned. In summary, the key themes of any future schemes are;

14.2. Good quality evidence

14.2.1. Ensure you have good quality evidence to demonstrate you can meet the Government criteria. This is essential when facing potential legal or public challenge

14.3. Knowledge of the area

14.3.1. Base any staff working on the initial data collection in the area being considered. Intelligence 'from the streets' is invaluable and often

contradicts historical records. We have found it has also contradicted information given by the landlords themselves.

14.3.2. Check address databases to ensure mail-merges don't produce invalid addresses or names or miss off the postcodes. This can be detrimental when proving a landlord has received certain pieces of communication.

14.4. **Staffing resource**

14.4.1. Make sure you have enough staff to manage the scheme throughout, and enough Manager support to deal with challenges, Freedom of Information requests and monitoring the project milestones and risks.

14.4.2. Even before a statutory consultation takes place, resources are needed to prepare the information, check addresses, collate all the background data that will be needed for a Cabinet/Committee report. This is legally challengeable so the work involved should not be underestimated.

14.4.3. Take into account any internal recruitment barriers and allow contingency for this. Also remember that the existing 'day job' will continue – so any scheme work needs 'additional' resource.

14.5. **Financial resources**

14.5.1. Do the figures and look at multiple options. Consider all options and risks and have mitigation in place. Make sure you work out the cost of running the scheme, including contingency for delays and changes to the proposals.

14.5.2. Ensure that the number of properties 'likely' to apply for a licence is as close as possible. We were surprised at the number of exemption applications – whether legitimate or not.

14.5.3. The cost of the fees should then be worked out by dividing the cost over 5 years, with the likely number of applications.

14.5.4. Remember that the cost of delivering the scheme, and the subsequent fees are challengeable and accountable and you should ensure you can justify the calculations.

14.5.5. Be open about what the costs are made up of so you can refer people to this when they ask questions. It is a financial risk to restrict costs simply to produce a lower licence fee. We have focussed on making sure

the fees would fully fund the scheme, but without making any profit, which is not permitted by the legislation

14.6. **Processes, practices and infrastructure**

- 14.6.1. Have as much ready/in place as you can. Treat it as a project and scope out as much as possible, using learning from other authorities.
- 14.6.2. Make room for the paperwork! Until landlords have capacity to provide everything electronically, there will be a lot of information coming in.
- 14.6.3. Get databases and filing systems ready to control the documents and information, bearing in mind information security and tracking the whereabouts of files.
- 14.6.4. Enable computer systems can receive online payments, or finance departments are briefed on direct debit payments. Fees must be collected and tracked.
- 14.6.5. Decide how you are going to manage the Fit and Proper process. This will depend on how strictly you use this provision. This is something that we were clear on from the start. We have been keen to challenge the detail of the legislation, especially in terms of satisfactory management arrangements. This still is treading new waters but the outcomes so far have far outweighed the work gone into it.

14.7. **Be clear on the need for good quality communications**

- 14.7.1. It is likely that any area being considered for Selective Licensing is already in the attention of the media/press. Withdrawing all communication increases reputational risk for the council as the public are not kept aware of what it being done to improve the situation. It also allows the press/media to create their own story and miscommunicate when the facts are not in the public arena.
- 14.7.2. Meet the needs of your target audience. Different groups need different information. Set a communications plan and monitor it throughout the period.
- 14.7.3. Reinforce key messages about what the scheme was and was not intended to achieve. Ensure these are promoted in any media attention.

14.8. **Mean what you say**

14.8.1. Don't threaten what you are not willing to carry out. If you are sending strong messages but do not pursue enforcement, it is of no value. Be clear amongst the service, Executive, Elected Members and the public what can and cannot be achieved through Selective Licensing.

14.8.2. Gain a mandate from the Cabinet Member or equivalent so that you are clear what the scheme is intended to deliver. Our experience in practice was more or less identical to the anecdotal and instinct 'evidence' collected over the years.

14.8.3. Because of our years of proactive work, and the wealth of advice and information we had been offering to landlords; the message was clear. We provide every opportunity for you to comply and be a landlord that takes their property and tenancy management seriously. But if you don't – we can and will take action straight away.

14.9. **Create dedicated legal resource**

14.9.1. By far one of the most beneficial aspects of our scheme has been to have a part time agency solicitor who has worked extremely closely on the development of the scheme, the legal Notice requirements as well as taking our prosecution cases to court. With reference to the previous summary point, Selective Licensing should be a last resort, so if landlords do not comply you must have the will and resource to pursue enforcement.

14.10. **Key messages**

14.10.1. Make sure everyone is saying the same thing. Making false promises about what Selective Licensing can achieve is damaging to the reputation of the Council. Keep expectations realistic and have a plan for the other issues present in the area; such as waste and ASB.

15. Next Steps

15.1. We will be;

15.1.1. Beginning a new programme of inspections whilst monitoring the outcomes of last year's inspection programme.

15.1.2. Ensuring that all enforcement Notices are served and charged for

15.1.3. Completing the final round of prosecutions for those that have not complied or supplied the correct information or payment

15.1.4. Communicating the achievements so far – on the Council's website and through a leaflet distributed to all occupants in the area.

- 15.1.5. Continuing investigations and prosecutions as required of those landlords who may have falsely applied for exemptions from licensing.
- 15.1.6. Giving more attention to the investigation of management standards breaches. This will be the beginning of having a greater effect on the behaviour and practices of landlords and agents in the area.
- 15.1.7. Considering the implications of new Selective Licensing legislation¹¹.
- 15.1.8. Monitoring other data such as house prices and ASB statistics
- 15.1.9. Preparing information for the new Cabinet Member regarding the existing Voluntary scheme area for future direction.

Paul Rotherham / Dave Hickling

Legal & Policy Officers

June 2015

¹¹ Just before the election, the Government introduced some additions to the Selective licensing legislation. This increased the criteria on which you can base a designation, arguably making it easier to qualify.

Appendix A

Selective Licensing Application Overview

PRIVATE RENTED PROPERTIES	
Expected number of eligible private rented properties	350
Exemptions Requested / eg Empties or family members	85
Confirmed Exempt / Empty	49
Total applications expected	301

OTHER PROPERTIES	
Confirmed Owner Occupiers	123
Confirmed Council & Housing Association Properties	68
Possible New Landlords/owners written to	36

APPLICATIONS	
Number of applications received	276
Number of valid applications (can be processed)	253
Applications where information still outstanding	25

LEGAL ACTION	
Court cases already complete	17
Number of new cases with Solicitor/awaiting court date/being prepared	11

LICENCES ISSUED	
Draft Licences Issued	244
Final Licences issued	240

Percentage of valid applications issued as Draft licence	96%
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Percentage of valid applications issued as Final Licence	95%
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Overall, a total of **93%** of properties are compliant with regards to their requirement to apply or register their exemption.

Figures are as of end May 2015. Please note these figures change as properties become let, empty, bought or sold.

Details of legal proceedings, Year One - Appendix B

	Name and Defendants address	Place of offence	Offence	Details and comment	Status/outcome
1	Anon	Hinde Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	There was no application for Selective Licensing	Listed in court on 26 June 2014 Case withdrawn following discussions with landlord. Not in the public interest to pursue
2	Anon	Popple Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	There was no application for Selective Licensing	Listed in court on 26 June 2014 Case withdrawn as considered not in the public interest to pursue at that time.
3	Anon	Lloyd Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	There was inadequate information with the application.	Withdrawn as information was provided. Not in the public interest to pursue.
4	Mr Abdul Qayum	119 Popple Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	There was no application for Selective Licensing	Guilty plea. There were mitigating circumstances. Mr Qayum was given a conditional discharge and ordered to pay £200 costs and victim surcharge. He has since applied and paid the higher fee for his licence.

5	Mr Mohammed Sajid Bashir 64 Page Hall Road	39 and 81 Willoughby Street, 38 Hinde Street, 96 Lloyd Street, 63 Robey Street, 135 Popple Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	Mr Bashir attempted to pay by instalments but has paid less than half the amount required.	First hearing was on 8 January 2015. Mr Bashir pleaded not guilty. Trial date set for 3 July 2015
5a	Mrs Kauser Sajid Bashir 64 Page Hall Road	39 and 81 Willoughby Street, 63 Robey Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	Mrs Bashir owns or part owns three of the properties being managed by Mr Bashir	As above
6	Mr Tabarak Sadiq	10 Lloyd Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	There was no application for Selective Licensing	First Hearing 5 February 2015, pleaded guilty. Total fines and costs £570
7	Mr Terry Jones trading as Castle Estates		Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	Agent did not pass on details regarding the landlords' requirement to licence and delayed in acting.	At trial on 10 April 2015 the Agent was found not guilty on the basis that they had not received the early communication about SL.
8	Mr Amer Javed – 3 offences	54 Popple Street and 75 Lloyd Street	Failure to licence	Amer Javed has failed to licence either property. He has been prosecuted for 54 Popple Street once and twice for 75 Lloyd Street	First prosecution for 75 Lloyd Street – total fines and costs fined £722.34. Prosecution for 54 Popple – fined £750, full costs and victim surcharge. At second prosecution on 12 March pleaded guilty and received total fines and costs of £900. Amer Javed has now sold one of these properties

9	Mr Tahir Sadiq	121 Popple Street, 75 Wade Street, 76 Willoughby Street	Failure to licence	He wanted to pay by instalments which are not allowed by the scheme. Owner was therefore non-compliant.	Court hearing 15 January 2015, pleaded guilty and received total fines and costs of £2,000 plus the costs of the SL fees.
10	Mr Imran and Mrs Adnan Iqbal	90 and 92 Page Hall road	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	Incomplete Selective Licencing applications	Court hearing 26 February 2015 both pleaded guilty – total fines and costs of £1,300. Now applied and paid the higher fee for both licences
11	Dr Frank Ononye and Mrs Bertha Ononye	21 Robey Street and 86 Lloyd Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	Failing to apply for a Selective licence	Defendants didn't attend and the case was proved in their absence. Total fines and costs of £4,825. An application has been made for one of these properties and we are working with the owners to reach adequate solution for the other.
12	Mr Ibrar Hussain	44 Willoughby Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	Failing to apply for a Selective licence	First hearing was 23 April 2015. Mr Hussain is introducing a new party into the proceedings.
13	Mr Raja Iqbal	115 Popple Street	Failure to licence	Failure to apply for a licence	Defendant didn't attend and the case was proved in his absence. Total fines and costs of £631.80.
14	Ms Naseem Akhtar	76 Robey Street	Failure to licence	Failure to apply for a licence	Defendant attended and pleaded guilty. Total fine and costs £170

15	Mr Amjid Khalil	52 Popple Street	Failure to licence	Failure to apply for a licence	Defendant attended and pleaded guilty. Total fines and costs of £170.
16	Anon		Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	Anon informed us that the property was occupied by his brother and sister so was exempt. An investigation has revealed that it was occupied throughout the licence period by non-relatives	Pending prosecution and other offences being considered.
17	A property Company and 3 directors	Willoughby Street, Popple Street	Failure to licence Housing Act 2014 Section 95	The company manage numbers of properties in the selective licensing area. Three of these do not have a licence	Evidence is being prepared

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Please note that fines are kept by the Courts. The Council can claim back its costs. This will fund future prosecution cases.

Appendix C

Summary of Fit and Proper/ test of suitable management arrangements –

The test of fit and proper is set out in Section 66 of the Housing Act 2004. It states that when considering if an applicant is fit and proper, the Council must take into account any evidence that you have: committed any offence involving fraud, violence, drugs or any sexual offences; practiced unlawful discrimination in the course of business; or contravened any provisions of housing or landlord and tenant law.

We must also consider any evidence that a person associated with you has done any of the things set out above and we consider this is relevant to the question of whether you are a fit and proper person to be the licence holder.

In considering whether the management arrangements are satisfactory, we must take into account: whether any proposed person to be involved with the management has a sufficient level of competence, whether they are a fit and proper person, and if management structures and funding arrangements are suitable.

All potential licence holders are subject to a fit and proper test and test of suitable management arrangements	
All potential managers are subject to fit and proper test and test of suitable management arrangements	
	Number
Number of potential licence holders identified with issues associated with the fit and proper test and test of suitable management arrangements	14
• Issues resolved by appointment of an alternative	2
• Issues resolved following a thorough examination of the issues with the licence holder	7
• Formal refusal of licence	5
Number of potential managers identified with issues	3
• Number of properties affected	21
• Properties where new management has been required/gained	19
• Properties where the manager has subsequently been accepted as suitable	2

As of May 2015

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Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 23rd July 2015

Report of: Policy & Improvement Officer

Subject: Work Programme 2015/16

Author of Report: Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer
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0114 273 5065

A proposed work programme is attached at appendix 1 for the Committee's consideration and discussion

The proposed work programme aims to focus on a small number of issues, in depth. This means that the Committee will need to prioritise which issues will be included on formal meeting agendas. In doing this, the Committee may wish to reflect on the prioritisation principles attached at appendix 2 to ensure that scrutiny activity is focussed where it can add most value.

Where an issue is not appropriate for inclusion on a meeting agenda, but there is significant interest from members, the Committee can request written briefings or presentations outside of formal scrutiny meeting time.

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

- Comment on the proposed work programme
 - Identify priorities for inclusion on agendas
 - Identify items for written briefings
-

**Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee
Draft Work Programme 2015-16**

Last updated: 13 07 2015

Please note: the draft work programme is a live document and so is subject to change.

Topic	Notes	Date
Implications of the Budget for Housing	The purpose is for the Committee to be aware of, and understand the implications of the changes announced by the Chancellor in the July budget. A Registered Social Landlord could also be invited to the meeting to provide their perspective.	September 2015
HRA Business Plan	The purpose is for the Committee to have an input prior to a Cabinet Report scheduled for January 2016. The Committee's October meeting has been suggested by officers as the best time for Scrutiny to have a meaningful input.	October 2015
Community Safety	March 2015 meeting agreed: "consideration be given to the inclusion of a meeting in the Committee's Work Programme of a themed meeting on Police and Community Safety which would include an update on the reorganisation of local policing." It is proposed to include the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM) as part of this wider item on Community Safety.	
Welfare Reform	March 2015 meeting requested " officers continue to present update reports to the Committee in their current form, so that Members could request further information on specific items either when they received the report or at the subsequent meeting." The Committee may also wish to consider hearing from external organisations, e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau.	
Housing+ Model and its Implementation	A formal report on the implementation of Housing+ is proposed, following which a Committee visit would be arranged to see how implementation is working 'on the ground.'	
Tenant Engagement Update	To provide the Committee with the opportunity to comment on proposals on the approach to community engagement. This could also pick up on the Committee's request for an update on the Challenge for Change Community Engagement report it looked at in September 2014.	

Challenge for Change: Vacant Property Management	The Council Housing Service's scrutiny group Challenge for Change (made up of customers) are now concluding their fourth review looking at vacant property management and would like to present to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee.	
Local Area Partnership	The Committee has previously requested a report be presented to the Committee, with the Cabinet Member and Lead Officer being invited to attend the meeting.	

Written Briefings 'For Information'

(Circulated with meeting papers, and officers do NOT attend the meeting)

Welfare Reform	- July 2013 Committee requested "a one page update on progress with Welfare Reform issues be provided to Committee Members bi-monthly" - November 2014 Committee requested "that future reports be set out to include comparative figures, so that trends could be identified."	Every meeting
Right to Buy Update	- The Committee have received a bi-monthly update on Right to Buy since November 2013. - November 2014 Committee requested "that future reports be set out in an appropriate table, which includes comparative figures, so that trends could be identified"	Every meeting

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The Committee's meeting dates are:

- 4.00pm Thursday 23rd July 2015
- 4.00pm Thursday 10th September 2015
- 4.00pm Thursday 8th October 2015
- 4.00pm Thursday 3rd December 2015
- 4.00pm Thursday 4th February 2016
- 4.00pm Thursday 7th April 2016

Selecting Scrutiny topics

This tool is designed to assist the Scrutiny Committees focus on the topics most appropriate for their scrutiny.

- **Public Interest**
The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny;
- **Ability to Change / Impact**
Priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically have an impact on, and that will influence decision makers;
- **Performance**
Priority should be given to the areas in which the Council, and other organisations (public or private) are not performing well;
- **Extent**
Priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the city (geographical or communities of interest);
- **Replication / other approaches**
Work programmes must take account of what else is happening (or has happened) in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort. Alternatively, could another body, agency, or approach (e.g. briefing paper) more appropriately deal with the topic

Other influencing factors

- **Cross-party** - There is the potential to reach cross-party agreement on a report and recommendations.
- **Resources**. Members with the Policy & Improvement Officer can complete the work needed in a reasonable time to achieve the required outcome

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Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 23rd July 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 26th March 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.

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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**Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development
Committee 26th March 2015**

Written responses to public questions asked by Mick Watts on housing repairs

1) Why choose the high cost option?

Insourcing is not 'the high cost option'. There will be initial up-front costs involved in transferring the service which are higher than for the other two options. However, following these initial costs, the insourced option is expected to generate sustainable year-on-year revenue savings. So in the longer-term this option is actually the cheapest. In addition, once fully integrated into the Council there will be further opportunities to reduce duplication, join-up procurement with other Council Services and increase efficiency within the Service – enabling it to achieve more and improve outcomes within the same level of spending.

Insourcing the HR&M Service will give the Council more control, flexibility and accountability in managing the Service, enabling the service to be fully integrated into the Council and to work in close partnership with other relevant key Council services. This will help to transform its approach to one which is more holistic, joined-up and outcome-focused. This cannot be achieved within the confines of an inflexible contractual arrangement.

In particular, it will enable the repairs service to integrate better with other housing services. Operatives will be more locally based, and will work closely with the new Neighbourhood Teams delivering Housing+ - which will mean we will be better placed to get to know customers, to keep them safe and to support them in successfully maintaining their tenancies.

Insourcing the Service will put it in a stronger position in terms of its ability to deliver the customer vision for the Service. The Service will be directly linked into the Council housing governance and engagement framework (as all other key Council Housing Services are), enabling greater transparency and accountability. This will also enable tenants and leaseholders to more easily have direct influence on how the service is shaped and delivered in the future.

Directly delivering the service in-house, with minor elements of it being outsourced to locally-based contractors wherever possible, would help support the concept of the 'Sheffield Brand'. Materials would be purchased from local suppliers wherever possible (subject of course to the usual procurement rules and Council policies), and the workforce would be predominantly local.

Sheffield would not be alone in insourcing a key service such as the HR&M Service. Independent research by APSE (the Association for Public Service Excellence) has identified a number of potential benefits of insourcing services, based on actual case-studies and local authority experiences:

- Improved performance
- Stronger links to corporate strategic objectives
- Greater flexibility, and more responsive to local and national policy changes
- Efficiency savings

- Improved customer satisfaction
- Enhanced local supply chains
- Better integration and joining-up with other relevant key services
- New development and employment opportunities for the city

There are of course risks associated with the option to insource the Service (as indeed there are with the other two alternative delivery options discussed in this report), and some of these risks are significant. However, measures are and will continue to be in place to mitigate these risks.

2) Which other local authorities have officers and members looked at?

During the course of compiling the report officers have visited Islington Council, Nottingham City Homes and Stockport Homes. In addition to this, a visit has been made to Sheffield by the City of Stoke on Trent.

Additionally officers have attended an “Association of Public Service Excellence” Seminar on Repairs and Maintenance at which speakers covered topics relating to the insourcing of housing maintenance.

A number of local authorities are in the same position as Sheffield in respect of working to develop in-sourced services who we are working closely with. Sheffield is by no means alone in developing plans for in-sourcing services across the country.

3) Which tenant groups have been consulted?

Tenants have been kept well-informed of progress on the Repairs Project. Updates have been given at February’s and April’s Local Area Housing Forums (LAHFs). All 56 TARAs across the city are invited to these, and so these meetings are representative of all tenants and leaseholders across the city and are a key channel through which the customer voice is heard. The project will be working closely with these, and other, forums over the next 2 years.

Updates have also been given at March’s Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel meeting and at meetings of the Investment and Repairs Partnership Group. An article will be included in the next edition of the InTouch magazine, which goes to all tenants and leaseholders.

Over the last 12 years tenants have been working closely with the Housing Service to develop customer service standards which are now embedded in the repairs service. As part of the existing repairs service governance arrangements, tenants and leaseholders can attend monthly Action Planning Groups. There are currently three groups whose role is to scrutinise performance and service standards across responsive repairs, heating mechanical and electrical and voids.

Customers have the opportunity to discuss how performance can be improved and make suggestions based on their day to day experience of the service. These Action Planning Groups are instrumental in ensuring that customers

have a direct influence in the way that services are shaped and performance standards maintained.

During the 'It's Your Shout' consultation campaign undertaken as part of the Future of Council Housing Programme, a large number of tenants were consulted with to find out which aspects of the housing service are most important to them. The Repairs Service emerged as one of the most important areas to tenants, and so a dedicated tenant-led Service Design Project Group was established to do more detailed work on building the tenant vision for the future repairs service.

The vision developed and agreed by this Group has formed the basis for work now being done with a sub-group of IRPG to develop a 'Target Operating Model' for the service. This Model will describe what the Service needs to do and how it needs to do it - and will help to ensure that the new repairs service achieves the agreed tenant vision.

What matters most to tenants is the performance, service standards and value-for-money of the repairs service - regardless of *who* delivers the service - and so these need to continue to be our focus in the consultation we do over the coming months.

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Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

23 July 2015

Report of: Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

Subject: Welfare Reform – July 2015 Update

Author of Report: Nicola Rees, Policy and Improvement Officer
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Summary:

At the meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee in July 2013, members requested that an update on welfare reform issues be provided to Committee Members bi-monthly. This update report for July 2015 presents the most recent data relating to Under-occupancy (Bedroom Tax), Council Tax Support, Benefit Cap and hardship schemes/discretionary payments. The report also includes an update on the forthcoming introduction of Universal Credit in Sheffield and information about the welfare reforms announced as part of the Government’s Summer Budget.

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 note the contents of the update report.

Category of Report: OPEN

Welfare Reform in Numbers – July 2015

3,814

Sheffield council tenants are affected by under-occupancy rules ('bedroom tax') of a total of 39,586 council tenants



50 less than three months ago

42%

have paid in full the shortfall in their benefit resulting from under-occupancy without receiving a DHP* payment

trend data is not available for this measure due to a change in method of reporting



3%

have paid nothing towards the shortfall in their benefit resulting from under-occupancy



down from 4% three months ago

31,000

working age people in Sheffield receive council tax support



all of whom must now pay at least 23% of their Council Tax

compared to around 32,000 working age CTS customers at a similar time last year

6,931

summonses have been issued to Council Tax Support customers since April 2015 for non payment of Council Tax



compared to 8004 summonses issued to CTS customers between 1 April and 30 June 2014

£1.7m

= value of summonsed debt for Council Tax Support customers since April 2015

average amount of debt = £250**

compared to £2.2m summonsed debt for CTS customers during the financial year 2014/15 at the same time last year

£317,233 = value of Discretionary Housing Payment awards made since 1st April 2015

£202,798 = value of Council Tax Hardship Scheme awards made since 1st April 2015

All figures are to 30 June 2015

*DHP = Discretionary Housing Payment. This statistic shows the percentage of tenants who have paid in full and have not received a DHP during the current financial year.

** At this stage the full annual outstanding debt is summonsed, not the unpaid debt to that date.

Welfare Reform: Additional data

- At the end of June 2015, **118 households** in Sheffield were subject to the **Benefit Cap**, the number of children within these households was 620. *This compares to 126 households subject to the Benefit Cap three months ago, at the end of March 2015.*
- At the end of June 2015, **256 Local Assistance Scheme grants** had been awarded since 1st April 2015.
- At the end of June 2015, **180 Local Assistance Scheme loans** had been awarded since 1st April 2015.

Universal Credit Update

Universal Credit is due to be introduced in Sheffield in January 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. Consequently, only a small number of people in Sheffield will receive Universal Credit initially; the anticipated volumes are due to be confirmed by DWP the end of July 2015.

The Council is working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on the delivery partnership agreement (DPA) which will set out how the Council will support the implementation of Universal Credit. As part of this agreement the Council will deliver advice and support to vulnerable customers, relating to budgeting skills and online skills. Funding will be available from DWP to support this work.

The Council will also provide a dedicated telephone line for DWP to contact Housing Benefits staff with any queries. A small team of officers from DWP and Sheffield City Council, led by the Head of Neighbourhood Intervention and Tenant Support, are currently working on the DPA and agreeing referrals and costs payable.

Summer Budget announcements on Welfare Reform

On 8 July the Government announced major changes to welfare and in particular, working age benefits to deliver an additional £12bn of savings, on top of the £21bn announced since 2010. Spending will be focussed on the elderly and disabled, meaning that working age people will be most significantly affected by the changes. The main specific proposals are as follows.

Housing Benefit

Automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit is to be withdrawn for 18-21 year olds, however there will be exceptions for vulnerable young people.

Household Benefit Cap

The cap is currently set at £350 per week (£18,000 per annum) for single persons and £500 per week (£26,000 per annum) for couples/single parents. The cap is to be reduced to £23,000 per annum for couples/single parents and £15,410 per annum for single persons in London. In the rest of the UK the cap is to be reduced to £20,000 per annum for couples/single parents and £13,400 for single persons. The cap does not apply in cases where the claimant, their partner or any children receive some specific benefits, including disability benefits and working tax credit.

Social housing changes

- From 2017-18, social tenants with household incomes above £40,000 in London and £30,000 in the rest of the UK, will pay “market or near market” rent. This will apply to tenants living in both SCC and RSL properties in Sheffield. For local authorities the surplus funds will be returned to the Exchequer.
- Rent payments for social housing will be cut by 1% per year for each of the next four years, from a frozen 2015/16 baseline.

Four year working age benefit freeze

Most working age benefits will be frozen for four years from April 2016. Since April 2013 they have been up-rated by 1% a year. This will include Job Seeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, some types of Housing Benefit, and Child Benefit. Pensions, Maternity Pay and disability benefits will be excluded.

Changes to Employment Support Allowance

The benefit rate for claimants of Employment Support Allowance who are in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) are to be set at same level as Jobseeker's Allowance (this is a reduction of £30 a week).

Changes to tax credit and universal credit calculations

- From April 2017, the way that tax credits are calculated is to be amended, by limiting the number of children in respect of whom the individual element of child tax credit is payable to two. This will apply to children born after 6 April 2017. Multiple births will be excluded from the limit.
- From April 2017, the number of children in respect of whom the child element of universal credit is payable will be restricted to two (with exceptions) and the higher rate of child element in respect of the first child will be removed to create a single flat rate. There will be an exception for claimants who are already responsible for more than two children at the point this clause comes into force. However such claimants will not be entitled to any further amounts for new children who enter the household, and the higher rate will cease to be payable once the first child leaves the household.

Earlier withdrawal of benefits for working households

There is to be a large reduction in how much families can earn before tax credits/universal credit (UC) start to be withdrawn. Tax credits will start to be withdrawn once family earnings are above £3,850 (rather than £6,420 at present). This means that anyone earning more than £3,850 will now have their income reduced more steeply.

“National Living Wage” announcement

On 8 July 2015 the Government also announced the introduction of a higher minimum wage for adults aged 25 and over - the “National Living Wage”. This will be set at £7.20 per hour in April 2016 (50p higher than the National Minimum Wage). It is set to increase such that it reaches 60% of median hourly earnings by April 2020. The Office for Budget Responsibility assumes this will be £9.35 in April 2020.

The Living Wage is set annually by the Living Wage Foundation. The current UK Living Wage is £7.85 an hour. The current London Living Wage is £9.15 an hour.¹

¹ <http://www.livingwage.org.uk/>



Report to Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

July 2015

Report of: Janet Sharpe – Director of Housing Services

Subject: Right to Buy update report

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

Summary:

The attached report provides information about the sales receipt generated from Right to Buy sales

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

1. Introduction

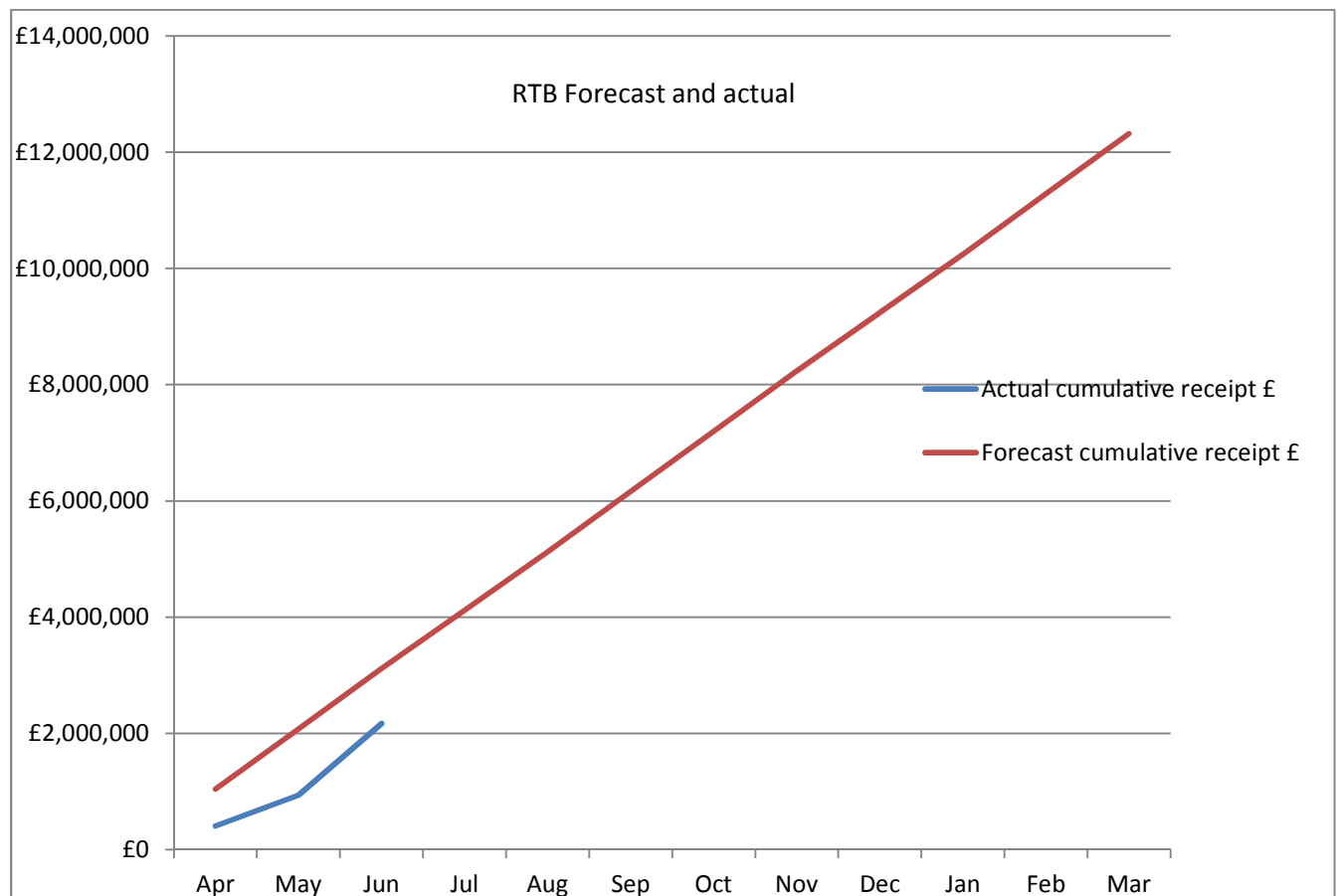
1.1 The following chart provides information as to the total Right to Buy receipt against the forecasted receipt for the financial year 2015 / 16

1.2 The forecast for Right to Buy sales for the year are:

Total sales 320 (i.e. 26.6 per month)

Average sale price £38,500

Total receipt £12,320,000



2. Activity

2.1 To date, end of quarter 1 there have been a total of 57 sales.

April sales = 11

May sales = 15

June sales = 31

2.2 This is down on the forecasted position by 24 sales however; this fits in with historic patterns of sales where typically we have fewer sales in May. This is due to the number of Bank Holidays. Right to Buy completions only take place on Mondays to fit in with weekly rent account payments, this in turn leads to an increase in sales in June.

2.3 Particularly as the number of years (*years as a tenant*) to qualify for the Right to Buy changed at the end of May from 5 years to 3 years and because of the gradual improvement in the Housing Market, it is still anticipated that the forecasted 320 sales will be achieved this year.

2.4 The average sale price is in line with forecast (£38,500) at £38,070.

3. Recommendation

3.1 The Committee is asked to note the update.

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