

# **Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee**

---

**Thursday 14 September 2017 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 Chris Peace (Chair), Sue Auckland, Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Michelle Cook, Richard Crowther, Dawn Dale, Keith Davis, Terry Fox, Mark Jones, George Lindars-Hammond, Magid Magid, Karen McGowan, Zahira Naz, Joe Otten 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](http://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 Diane Owens, Policy and Improvement Officer, on 0114 2735065 or email [diane.owens@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:diane.owens@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  
14 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**Order of Business**

---

- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of Public and Press**  
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public
- 4. Declarations of Interest**  
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting**  
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2017
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**  
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public
- 7. Challenge for Change - The Quality of Rehousing Services**  
Report of the Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group
- 8. Work Programme 2017/18**  
Report of the Policy and Improvement Officer

**For Information Only**

- 9. Welfare Reform Update**  
Report of the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications
- 10. Towers Blocks Update - Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks**  
Report of the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Service
- 11. Date of Next Meeting**  
The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2017, at 4.00 pm, in the Town Hall

This page is intentionally left blank

---

## 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 Audit and 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](mailto:gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk).

This page is intentionally left blank

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 6 July 2017

**PRESENT:** Councillors Chris Peace (Chair), Sue Auckland, Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Richard Crowther, Keith Davis, Terry Fox, Dianne Hurst, Mark Jones, George Lindars-Hammond, Magid Magid, Karen McGowan, Zahira Naz, Joe Otten and Zoe Sykes

.....

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Michelle Cook (with Councillor Dianne Hurst attending as Councillor Cook's substitute), and Councillor Dawn Dale.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

4.1 The minutes of meetings of the Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> April and 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017, were approved as correct records.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 Alan Kewley questioned whether, in the light of the fact that details of the Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership Board, including agendas and minutes, had not been published on the Sheffield First Partnership's website for over six months, that full details of the Board were published on the City Council's website as soon as possible.

5.2 The Chair requested that the Policy and Improvement Officer contacts the Housing and Neighbourhoods Team to look into this request, at the earliest possible opportunity.

5.3 Further public questions were received, which related to Item 7 – Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks, and were reported as part of that item.

**6. RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK GROUP ON HATE CRIME**

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Place, providing

information on the Council's response to the recommendations of this Committee's Cross-Party Task Group on Hate Crime.

- 6.2 In attendance for this item were Maxine Stavrianakos (Head of Neighbourhood Intervention and Tenant Support) and Chief Inspector Ian Proffitt (South Yorkshire Police).
- 6.3 Maxine Stavrianakos took the Committee through the report, highlighting the various challenges identified by the Task Group and focusing on the recommendations made by the Group.
- 6.4 Ian Proffitt, who had held the post of Temporary Chief Inspector of the Support Hub (City Lead for Hate Crime) and who had contributed to the work of the Task Group, referred to the 'Hate Hurts. Report It' campaign, which had been launched in February 2017, to raise awareness of hate crime in South Yorkshire. In conjunction with the campaign, the police have also been working with partner organisations to encourage reporting. The South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE) and bus companies were also supporting the campaign by displaying posters on buses and trams, and at Travel South Yorkshire interchanges across the county. The police were also in contact with the Council's Licensing Service, with the aim of having the campaign details on a small card to be available in Hackney Carriage taxis and possibly Uber taxis. The posters had also been widely distributed to pubs, nightclubs and cinemas in the region. As part of the campaign, there had also been a review of third-party reporting centres, with the aim of simplifying the process to make it easier for people to report incidents of hate crime. This had included the launch of several new reporting centres, together with the development of a training package for use by police officers in schools. Chief Inspector Proffitt stated that although there had been an increase in reports of hate crime, from April to June 2017, in Sheffield, to 250, the police were not too concerned, as they took some assurance that, as a result of the recent campaign, and other publicity in this regard, more people were now reporting incidents.
- 6.5 Councillor Magid Magid reported on the work of the Equalities Hub Network in connection with hate crime, which included working with the Task Group, specifically arranging two joint sessions to exchange/share information.
- 6.6 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- Funding in respect of future work in connection with hate crime was obtained through the Community Safety Partnership.
  - Training on all aspects of hate crime was viewed as a very important part of the overall process, and such training had extended to the City Centre Ambassadors.
  - The Performance Planning and Resources Group (PPRG) was responsible for overseeing performance on hate crime, on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership and, as part of the work carried out by the Scrutiny

Group, it had been identified that the City Centre Ambassadors were likely to witness incidents of hate crime. A briefing for the Ambassadors, together with a reporting mechanism, had been set up, and all incidents reported would be monitored, alongside other data on hate crime, by the PPRG.

- Housing and Neighbourhood Services had rolled out the Housing+ approach from 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2016, where all Council tenants were able to have a dedicated Housing+ officer, and it was also believed that this contributed to better information on, and reporting of, hate crimes.
- It was considered that the design of the Campaign posters/stickers made it very clear for people to understand its aims and objectives. There had been issues in terms of some organisations agreeing to have posters/stickers in their windows, and there was an element of reliance on such organisations to support the campaign in this way. Literature on the Campaign was available in a number of different languages.
- The Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel was chaired independently by Stop Hate UK, and the police had not taken any steps to increasing the numbers of representatives on this Panel as it was not responsible for managing the Panel. It was accepted that there was a need to get more people involved in the work of the Panel, and consideration had been given to working with the Equalities Hub Network in this regard.
- The police were currently liaising with the Council's Licensing Service in connection with arranging for calling cards to be placed in all Hackney Carriage taxis, and Uber had also expressed an interest in its drivers having such cards in their vehicles.
- The police accepted that there was a fine line between freedom of speech and hate speech and, in terms of what action it would take, would assess each case on its own merits. There were a number of court cases that referenced the differences, which the police used, but it was still a very challenging job in terms of making a judgement. If the police found someone preaching from scriptures, they would record the incident and determine whether it was a hate crime or a criminal offence in terms of further action to be taken.
- The Hate Crime Co-ordinator would be a police officer, whose post would be funded by the Local Authority, and who would be based in Local Authority offices.
- It was intended that the statistics regarding the independent hate crime reporting telephone line, delivered by Stop Hate UK, would be reported on a regular basis.
- The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety (Councillor Jayne Dunn) had written to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) requesting changes to the South Yorkshire Police recording systems to enable better interrogation of the data and improve understanding of who is

affected by hate crime in South Yorkshire. Councillor Dunn and Maxine Stavrianakos had then met with the PCC and Assistant Chief Constable, Tim Forbes, on 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2017, who had agreed to look into what changes could be made and feed back.

- In terms of how South Yorkshire Police and Stop Hate UK complimented each other, Stop Hate UK ran the independent Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel, and provided an independent reporting line, from which they could pass on crimes to the police. This provided an alternative route to report crimes, in the same way that Crime Stoppers does.
- The minutes of the meetings of the Sheffield Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership could be circulated to members of this Committee.
- A Sheffield Hate Crime Action Plan had been produced. Further work would be undertaken on the actions in this Plan once the joint post of Hate Crime Co-ordinator had been recruited to. The Plan would contain actions for the Local Authority, the police and partners.
- Details of all hate crimes reported were logged, with the information then being broken down in terms of the precise nature of the incident.
- Police representatives had met with First Mainline to discuss the possibility of staff of that Company receiving specific training regarding hate crime. Although nothing had been formalised at this stage, there was a willingness on the part of First Mainline to work with the police on this issue, and it was planned that police officers would pursue this over the next 12 months. Reference was also made to police on-line training for its staff, and there would also be a training package for other organisations, which would include the Council's City Centre Ambassadors.
- Although the police had not been made aware of specific incidents in terms of hate crime within shops and supermarkets, they would be happy to look into this.
- The staff working on the hate crime reporting telephone line, being delivered by Stop Hate UK, would be able to speak a number of different languages, and in those cases where a specific language was not spoken, the callers would be directed to relevant websites.
- In terms of follow-up actions following far-right demonstrations, it was envisaged that the Neighbourhood Community Policing Teams, which were to be re-introduced in September 2017, would get involved, by providing help, assistance and guidance to any members of the public affected by such actions.
- Work was continually taking place to look at how to make it easier for people to report hate crime, including looking at identifying further organisations who could become third party reporting centres. It was also hoped that, following the re-introduction of the Neighbourhood Community Policing Teams, this

would offer a further opportunity for people to report crimes. Members of the public could also report such crimes to Crimestoppers.

- Approximately £10,000 from the Council's Community Safety Partnership budget was allocated towards dealing with hate crime. In addition to this, the Sheffield Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership, with a contribution from the Local Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner, had funded the post of Hate Crime Co-ordinator. A number of other partner organisations, including Health, the Probation Service and the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service contributed in other ways.
- The majority of hate-related incidents were reported to the police. They were then referred to the Sheffield Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership, who would look into the details in respect of each incident, in order to determine how to address the issues.
- Details of where incidents had taken place would be logged as part of the reporting process, therefore resources, such as additional training, could be targeted to those areas where there was a high number of incidents.
- Whilst there were no details in terms of action and planned events for the Hate Crime Awareness Week, which would run from 14<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October 2017, discussions would commence shortly in terms of such plans.
- All hate-related incidents were referred to Victim Support as a matter of routine.

6.7 RESOLVED: That this Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the information now reported by the partner agencies;
- (b) (i) thanks Maxine Stavrianakos, Councillor Magid Magid and Temporary Detective Chief Inspector Ian Proffitt for attending the meeting and reporting on the work undertaken by their respective organisations in connection with prevention of hate crime and (ii) requests that they attend a future meeting of the Committee to report on progress on the Sheffield Hate Crime Action Plan; and
- (c) requests Detective Chief Inspector Ian Proffitt to provide a future meeting of the Committee with an update on the work of the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel.

## **7. FIRE SAFETY ON COUNCIL HIGH RISE RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS**

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services containing an update in terms of the action being taken in connection with providing assurances to residents living in high rise accommodation in Sheffield with regard to their safety, following the recent fire at the Grenfell Tower in London, on 14th June 2017.

- 7.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Jayne Dunn (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety), Janet Sharpe (Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services) and Jill Hurst (Head of Housing Investment and Repairs).
- 7.3 The Committee received two questions from members of the public on this issue, as follows:-
- 7.3.1 John Cawthorne, member of the Hanover Tenants' and Residents' Association, read out a detailed statement on behalf of the Association and tenants of the Hanover tower block, highlighting a number of issues following the Grenfell tower disaster, and the consequent action taken by the Council in terms of the assessment of the cladding material and the work undertaken to reassure tenants that they were safe in their homes, and that they were fully supported.
- 7.3.2 Andrew Woodhead questioned whether the Committee could urge the Council to recognise that stripping the cladding off the Hanover tower block was only half the work, and that preparation needed to be started now to put fire safe cladding back on to the block. This work needed to be undertaken as soon as possible if more expense was not to be incurred.
- 7.4 The report set out details of results of the assessment of all blocks over six stories, as required by the Department for Communities and Local Government, in order to establish if the cladding material contained an Asbestos Composite Material (ACM). The report also contained details of the Council's 'Stay Put' policy, the use of sprinklers, tower block management and inspection, communications, details of tower block fire safety information meetings, and Housing Association, University and private sector housing tower blocks.
- 7.5 Specific reference was made to Hanover tower block, following receipt of information from the Building Research Establishment (BRE) on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2017, that one element of the external cladding on the tower block had failed the new fire tests. Councillor Jayne Dunn and Janet Sharpe commented further on the work which had already been undertaken, and would continue to be undertaken, in connection with the removal of the external cladding element from the block, the additional security measures which had been put in place in order to reassure residents and meetings held with residents to provide reassurance and respond to any concerns they had.
- 7.6 Councillor Jayne Dunn and Janet Sharpe provided a brief update on the current position, following the presentation made by the Chief Executive at the Council meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017.
- 7.7 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- The Council was very comfortable in terms of the policies and procedures put in place following the Grenfell tower disaster and in some cases, the steps taken had been over and above what had been required. The Council

already undertook a considerable amount of work in terms of fire safety regarding its tower blocks. As part of the assessment process, a number of issues with regard to quality of repairs had been identified, and would be addressed. Reference was also made to plans to amend the Council's tenancy conditions. It was hoped that any additional works, following the assessment process, would be funded by the Government, and the Council continued to lobby the Government in this respect.

- Whilst the precise details in terms of the decision to use the ACM were not known, it was known that such panels had been given the same safety rating as aluminium.
- The reason for the testing of the aluminium, even though it was accepted that there were no fire risks involved with this material, was simply to comply with the request of residents, and thus provide additional reassurance to them.
- Whilst there was a lack of clarity in terms of how Camden Council managed their tower blocks, officers understood the reasoning behind that Council's decision to establish a post of Head of Residents Safety, following the Grenfell Tower Block disaster. The primary role for Sheffield was to ensure that the Council complied with all the relevant regulations.
- The Council worked very closely with the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (SYFRS) in connection with rough sleepers lighting fires in stairwells in high rise tower blocks, and was planning to extend this work to low-rise blocks also. Whilst the Council planned to continue with this work, there was an expectation that the Government would introduce new building regulations following the Grenfell Tower Block inquiry. It was accepted that there was a need for a consistent approach in terms of all Council tower blocks.
- The Department for Communities and Local Government (DfCLG) had provided specific guidance, as part of its announcement on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2017, in terms of the samples to be taken, and submitted to the BRE, as part of the assessment process. The Council had been requested to provide samples where the cladding material appeared to be different, and also samples above and below 18 metres.
- The Council had communicated extensively with residents of the Hanover tower block, using members of the Tenants' and Residents' Association, as well as the National Translation Line in connection with any issues regarding the translation of publicity material.
- As at 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017, the Council had received 15 requests from residents of the Hanover tower block to be relocated, with the majority of these people already having made plans to move out anyway. Officers were liaising with those families who wished to move out, but be relocated within the surrounding area, in terms of school places for their children and any other issues or concerns they had. Officers were also dealing with a number of requests for families to be relocated during the six-week period when the cladding was to be removed.

7.8 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) requests:-
  - (i) the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services to (A) submit a report on the progress of the assessment and cladding works to a future meeting and (B) continue working closely with the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service in connection with the risks caused by rough sleepers lighting fires in the stairwells in Council tower blocks;
  - (ii) that, as suggested by Birmingham City Council, a joint letter, to be signed by the Leaders of all the Core Cities, be sent to the Government, requesting that it helps pay for the fire suppression measures in all local authority residential tower blocks; and
  - (iii) that representatives of the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, the Ambulance Service and the Health and Safety Executive be invited to attend a future meeting of this Committee; and
- (c) expresses its thanks and appreciation to Councillor Jayne Dunn (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety), the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services and all other members of staff involved, for the excellent work undertaken by them in response to the Government announcement on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2017, following the Grenfell Tower Block disaster.

## **8. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

- 8.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson), attaching the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2017/18.
- 8.2 Councillor Terry Fox suggested that the Joint Chairs of the Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership Board attend a future meeting of the Committee to inform Members of the role of the Board.
- 8.3 Councillor Steve Ayris suggested that the Committee receive a report on a review of Housing+, possibly as a briefing paper.
- 8.4 Councillor Magid Magid suggested that the Committee receive a report on progress in respect of gun/knife crime in the City, possibly as part of the item on Neighbourhood Policing, to be considered at the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017.
- 8.5 RESOLVED: That, subject to the amendments and suggestions now reported, approval be given to the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2017/18.

**9. FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY**

- 9.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications, on the Council's Financial Inclusion Strategy and the Financial Inclusion Action Plan, which had been approved by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Also appended to the report was a document 'Fairer Sheffield – A User-Friendly Guide to Support and Services'.
- 9.2 The Committee noted the contents of the report now submitted.

**10. WRITTEN RESPONSES TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

- 10.1 The Committee received and noted a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) setting out the written responses to the public questions raised at its meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 11.1 It was noted that (a) the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017, at 4.00 pm, in the Town Hall, and (b) all future scheduled meetings of the Committee would now commence at 4.00 pm, and not 5.00 pm.

This page is intentionally left blank



## Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017

**Report of:** Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group

**Subject:** **Challenge for Change: The Quality of Rehousing Services**

**Author of Report:** Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group

### Summary:

The customer scrutiny panel known as Challenge for Change (C4C) was set up in 2011 to perform an independent review of services delivered by the Council Housing Service. This report covers the group's recent project to review the quality of Rehousing Services. The overall purpose of the project was to examine how well the Council Housing Service delivers Rehousing Services and to check how it compares with similar organisations. The group looked at how accessible the services is, how easy is it to use the services and what help is available for customers who need it. The purpose was to identify where improvements to the service are needed from a customer's point of view.

The Group's report, including findings and recommendations is attached.

The report has been presented to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel (HANAP) and the Council Housing Service's "Community Engagement Partnership Group" (a meeting for all council tenants in the city). Managers responsible for the Rehousing service will report back to the C4C group on their progress in implementing the recommendations.

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

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

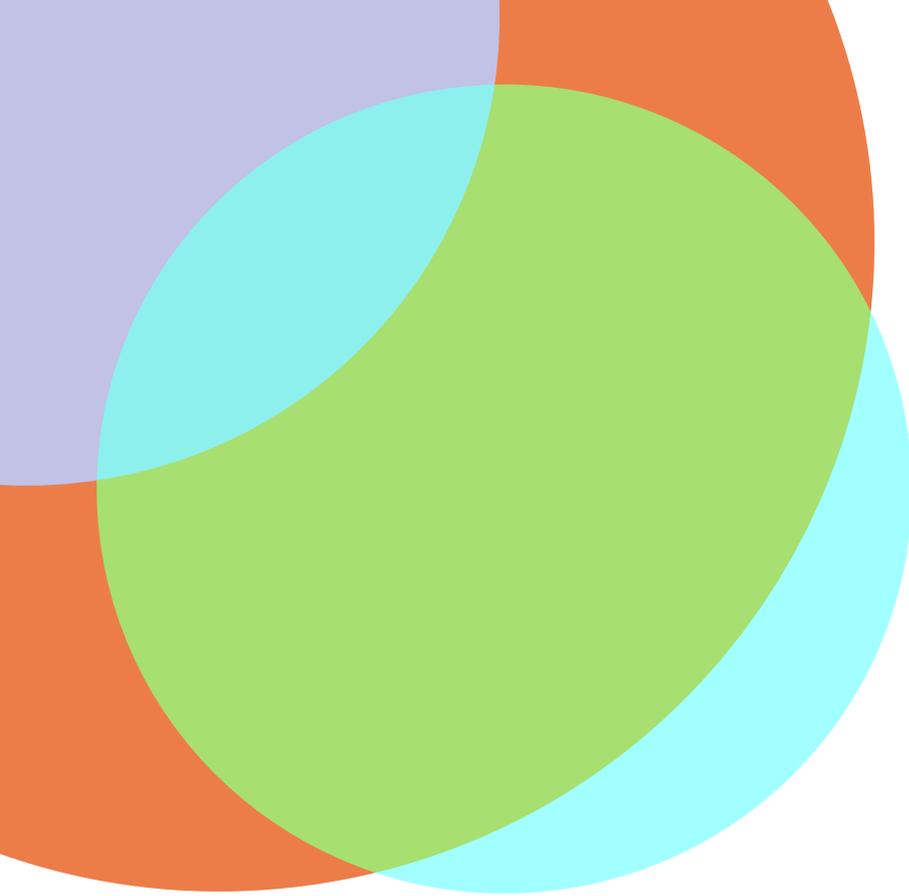
**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

To comment on the recommendations made in the Challenge for Change Report and in due course receive an update on progress in implementing recommendations from Managers within the service.

---

**Background Papers: Report attached**

**Category of Report:** OPEN



# Challenge for Change

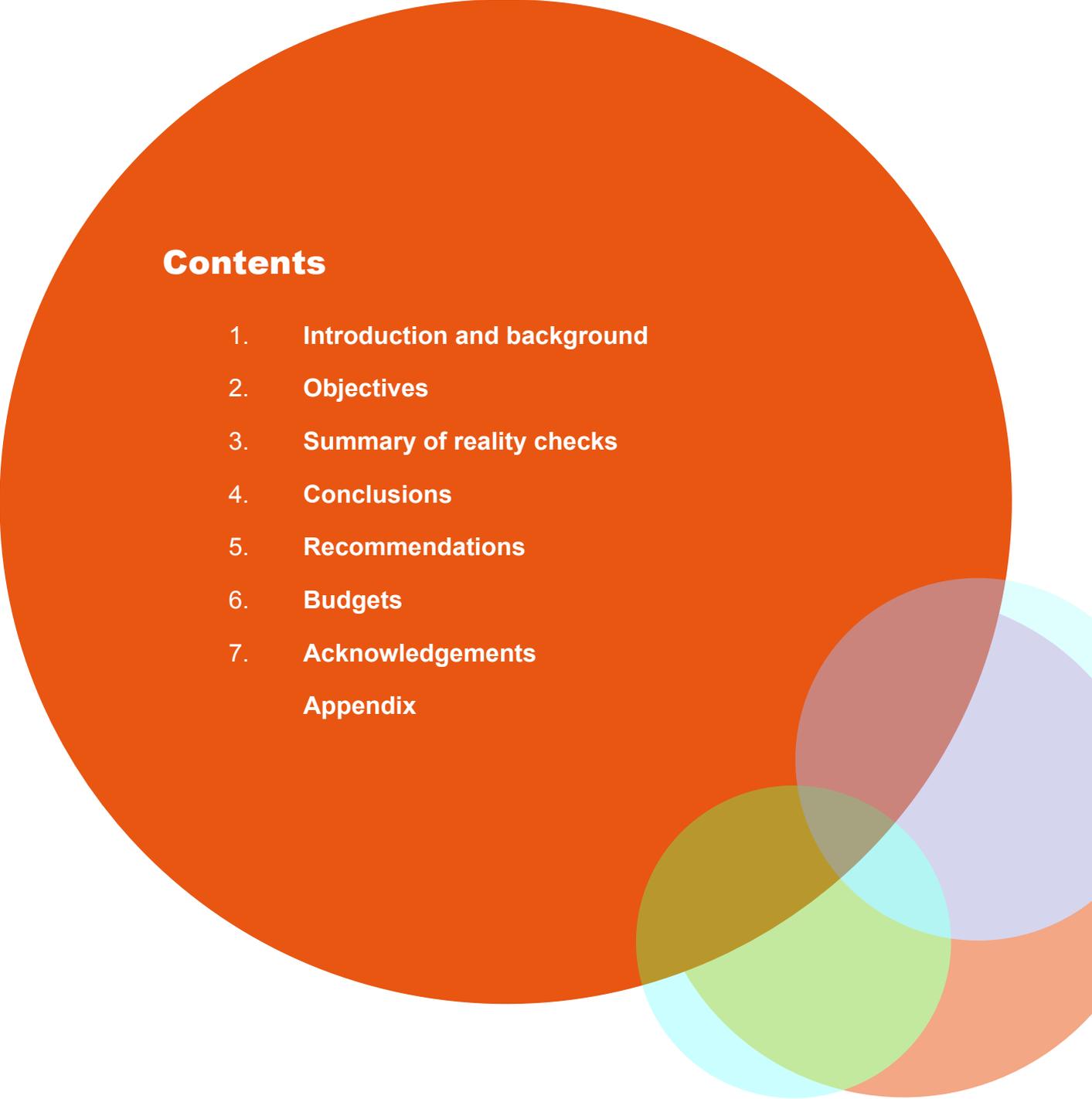
---

## *Scrutiny Report* Quality of Rehousing Services

*June 2017*





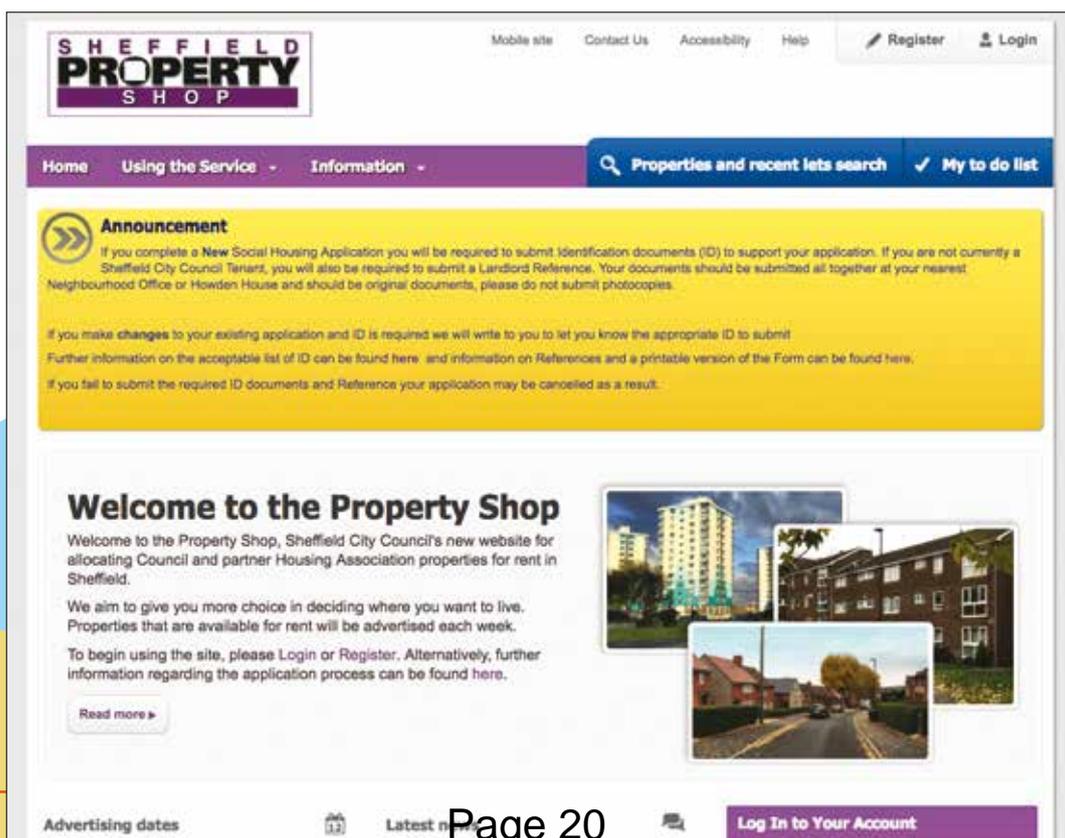


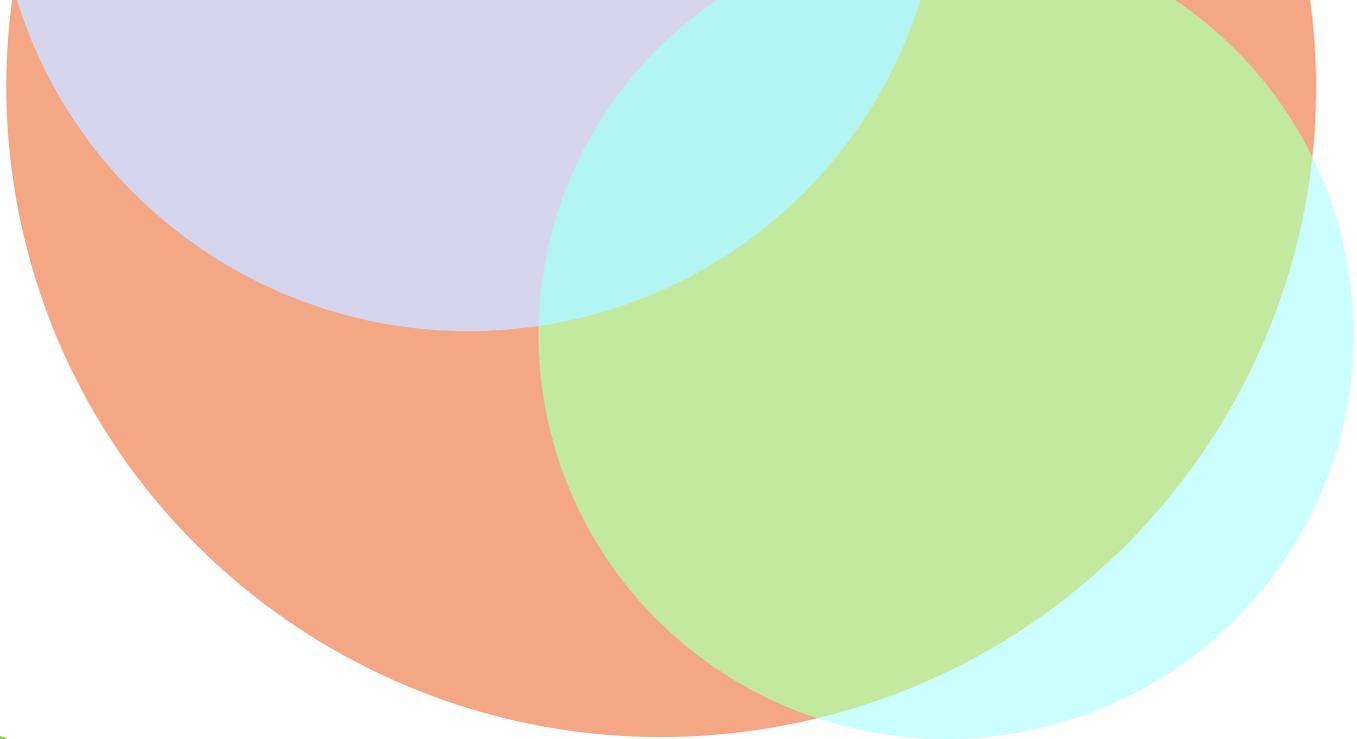
## **Contents**

1. **Introduction and background**
  2. **Objectives**
  3. **Summary of reality checks**
  4. **Conclusions**
  5. **Recommendations**
  6. **Budgets**
  7. **Acknowledgements**
- Appendix**

# 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Challenge for Change is a customer scrutiny panel that was set up to review different parts of the Council Housing Service. Open to tenants, leaseholders and customers of the service. The group has carried out several reviews, produced a series of reports and recommendations for service improvement. Throughout this report the scrutiny will be called C4C.
- 1.2 This project was suggested by the Council Housing Service during late summer 2016 and involved, Linda Moxon, Max Richardson, Ian Alexander, Clive Alexander, Dene Stockdale, Terence Oaks and Angela Moreno.
- 1.3 The subject is how effective the Council Housing Service's registration process and bidding works for customers.
- 1.4 In this report C4C has detailed its findings following investigations that have included: meeting with staff at all levels, reviewing information being provided to customers including the website, mystery shoppers, review of SCC, interviewing customers and other websites.
- 1.5 C4C has made a number of judgements and recommendations based on its findings. These are detailed within the report and in a summary appendix which includes evidence and impacts.
- 1.6 The overall purpose of the project was to see how well the Council Housing Service delivers Rehousing Services and to check how it compares with similar organisations e.g. how accessible is the services? How easy is it to use the services? What help is there available for customers?





## 2. Objectives

From C4C's initial research and discussions, it identified the following objectives for this project:

- The website, how usable is it? Is it working for everyone? What is it meant to do? How up to date is it?
- How user friendly are the offices for customers. Have they got capacity e.g. is Howden House too busy? How well does the phone service work?
- Staff perspective. What impact Housing+ is making. Is there staff training to help vulnerable customers?
- What support is available to vulnerable groups? What form does it take?
- What type of information is available in offices e.g. local area Housing Offices?
- In Howden House properties can be viewed. What is the quality of information such as quantity, photos, and internal photos of properties? Is information available in different Languages and is there any pre visit information, Benefit information and Community information?
- How to get a Council House. Understanding the eligibility and the impact of changes in circumstances e.g. household composition.
- How easy is it to register? How easy is it to bid for a property? How easy is it to update your information after registration?
- Understand banding. Test the quality of written material.
- What is done to help new tenants and keep them where they are and give them assurance of stability?



## 3. Summary of reality checks

### 3.1 Meetings with Staff

C4C has met a group of staff during the course of our investigation from senior managers to front line officers in Rehousing and a Housing area. Rehousing staff told us about their role and how they support and interact with customers. A lack of clear signposting for the property shop was raised which affected customers and staff.

Staff in the area told us they try to see new tenants within 2 weeks. They talked with new tenants about any problems and told them about the local amenities. Because they have more contact with tenants they are able to head off problems before they get serious

The manager of the Rehousing Service confirmed that the same services should be available in the local housing offices as in Howden House.

### 3.2 Review of Rehousing Website

When C4C started the project the website was the old one, which had many problems and issues with registering and bidding.

During the project the group were able to review the new website and test it. It was easier to use and is improved. It can be accessed on smart phones or tablets.

To find out how the registration works we did a number of real registrations and looked at the bidding process. We reviewed the information available to understand how banding works, who is eligible for priority to get a property and why.

We have looked into other organisations and compared with the Property Shop website and found there's not much difference between them.

### **3.3 Talking to Customers**

We have talked with a customer whose English was not their first language, who was bidding for a property (using the translation facility) and found the website easy to use and understood the banding process. An interpreter was provided during the housing agreement process because it is a legal document to sign. Housing officers did go out after two weeks to check if everything was fine and if they were settled.

We have talked to an elderly person and we found out that they had registered on a tablet and found it straight forward and easy to understand.

At the Housing Equalities meeting, customers with a brain injury said that they can feel pressurized into accepting any property. NHS staff advised that they offer a free course for “Mental Awareness”.

### **3.4 Mystery Shops**

In some cases services were excellent such as at Hillsborough First Point where the member of staff spent a lot of time helping a challenger register.

In other cases wrong information was given to the challengers which caused them problems.

A challenger was also sent to Howden House from one of the areas officers when they requested information about rehousing in another language.

### **3.5 Review of Information**

Written information was not easily found in the areas offices because they were hidden out of sight. In one office information was not available.

Information available on the leaflet and website was useful and clear.

## 4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Challenge for Change compared how the new website system works and compares with other organisations. We felt that it works well.
- 4.2 Looking at the new web page, this appears to be a big improvement on the old one, easier to use and looks more appealing.
- 4.3 Training could be improved, particularly in customer service at Howden House and at local housing offices.
- 4.4 Deregistration is not always necessary as upset and work is created to no value.
- 4.5 Answering of emails should always happen, even if it's just to say you have received it, a letter with more information can always follow.
- 4.6 Housing+ should be able to be of assistance to customers needing help in their area, particularly the vulnerable.



## 5. Recommendations

- R1. Provide ongoing staff training in customer services, and test staff learning.
- R2. Ensure action is taken following any satisfaction surveys.
- R3. Make sure staff in the local offices are trained and are providing the correct information to customers.
- R4. Ensure staff offer customers the option to discuss personal information in a private space.
- R5. Plan and increase staffing at busy times; back office staff could be more flexible and help out at busier times.
- R6. Offer one to one appointments for customers.
- R7. Local Housing Offices need to know what is available for customers whose first language isn't English.
- R8. Ensure Housing Plus officers use their knowledge of vulnerable people to support rehousing process where required.
- R9. Review and ensure staff training includes providing appropriate support for vulnerable people.
- R10. Make available (for perspective and new tenants) additional information for local services such as:- schools, pharmacy, doctor, dentist and places of worship.
- R11. Improve staff training to increase knowledge of registration process.
- R12. Ensure written information such as leaflets are available and refreshed at Housing Offices.
- R13. At the beginning of the on-line registration process let customers know what ID information they need to have with them as registering is time limited.
- R14. Review the de-registration process; If someone is still living in the same property give staff the authority to re-instate their waiting time (by not doing this challengers feel that extra work and upset is created to no value).
- R15. Manage de-registration by E-mailing out to tenants who prefer this format of communication; however send a letter first before emailing.
- R16. Improve processes for dealing with electronic communication to ensure tenants receive an initial acknowledgement and answer is provided.
- R17. On a web search if there are no properties available in that postcode area the website should say that, as well as giving nearby properties.

Appendix 1 lists the evidence and impact exercise that supports the recommendations.

## 6. Budget

6.1 C4C were allocated a budget for the duration of the scrutiny project and spent well within it. Expenses were incurred as follows from April 2016 to March 2017.

- Refreshments £130.94
- C4C members expenses £100.97

## 7. Acknowledgments

The team would like to thank Tina Gilbert and Josie Billings from Business Planning, Strategy and Improvement for their invaluable assistance with this project. Without their support, this project would not have got off the ground.

They were also instrumental in arranging manager/staff interviews and other meetings we have been to as part of our investigations.

We would also like to thank the following for their co-operation with our investigations, allowing us to carry out interviews, giving up time to answer questions and attend meetings to gather information.

Rehousing Service Manager – Rehousing Team

Rehousing Project Manager

Housing Plus and Rehousing Staff

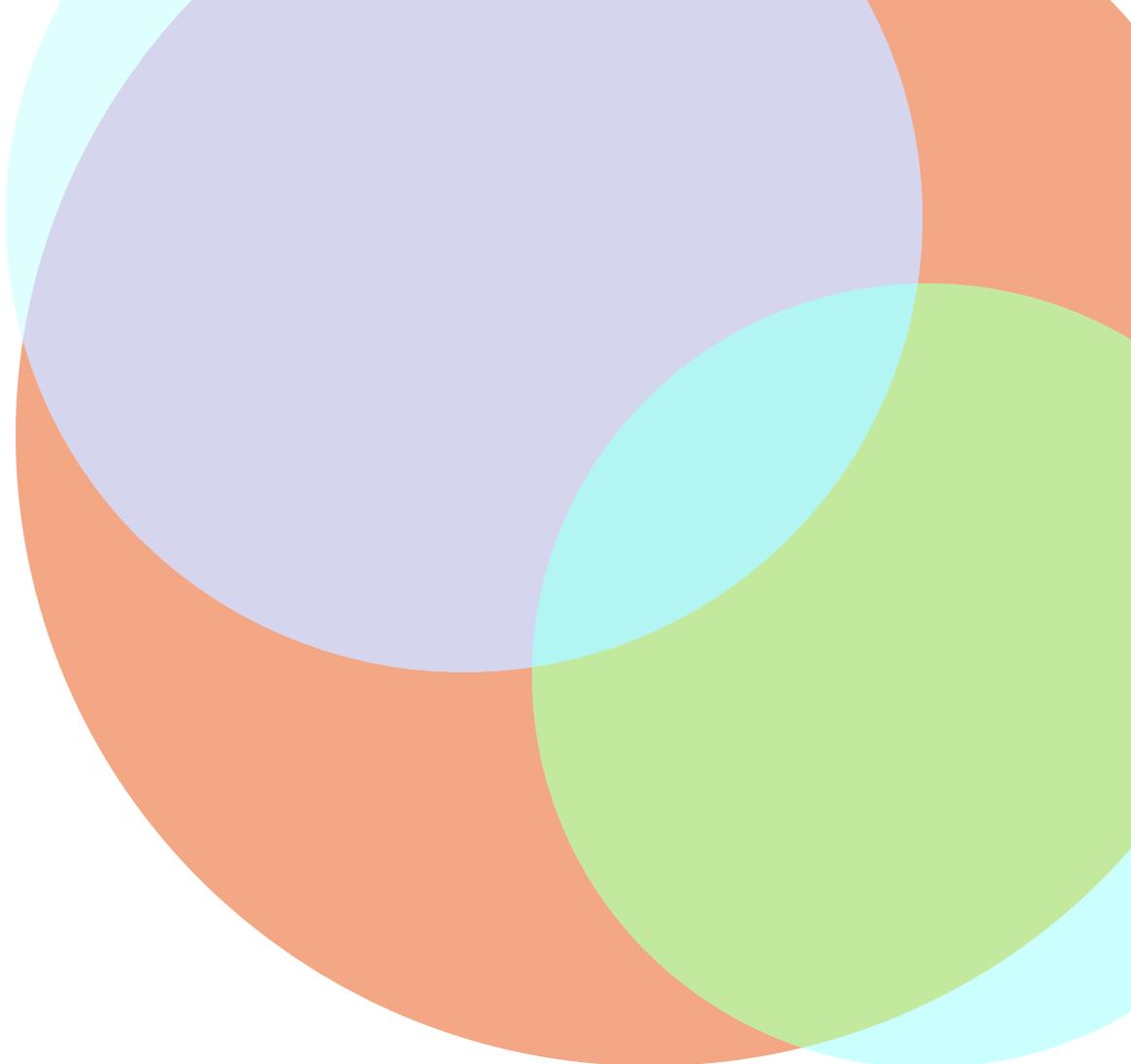
## Appendix 1

	What is the C4C Judgement?	What Evidence do we have to support that judgement?	What Impact is this having on customers?	Recommendation
<b>1 CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>				
1.1	Variable customer service received depending on the member of staff – from “couldn’t do enough to help” to “uninterested”.	Mystery Shops. 1 x Hillsbrough. 3 x Howden House. 1 x Newfield Green. 1 x Darnall. 1 x Housing Call Centre.	Inconsistent service is provided which can make customers feel inferior or that they are not important.	Training in customer services. Test staff learning. Ensure action is taken following any Satisfaction survey.
1.2	Good consistent customer services are not always provided at the local area office.	A number of mystery shops – where challengers were directed to Howden House.	Inconvenience, confusion, poor service, financial hardship for customers on limited income to travel to Howden House.	Make sure staff in the local offices are trained and are providing the correct information to customers.
1.3	The offer of going to a private space when discussing confidential issues isn’t offered to customers.	Mystery Shops. Howden House.	Customers feel uncomfortable, and may feel that they can’t provide the answers.	Staff should offer customers the option to discuss personal information in a private space.
1.4	At busy times staff are not able to help those who need support with the website.	Mystery Shops. Howden House. Customer Feedback. Newfield Green Office.	No support available for those with no/ limited IT skills who then cannot register/ bid.	Plan and increase staffing at busy times. Back office staff could be more flexible and help out at busier times. Offer one to one appointments for customers.
1.5	Support for those with language needs is mixed depending on where the customer goes.	Area staff directed customer to contact Howden House.  Call centre said they would be able to help.  Property Shop staff confirmed they had facilities.  Interpreter was available for sign-up.	All customers do not have access to the help they require.	Local housing offices need to know what is available.

	What is the C4C Judgement?	What Evidence do we have to support that judgement?	What Impact is this having on customers?	Recommendation
1.6	Support for vulnerable people is available when it's identified.	Mystery Shops. Staff feedback from rehousing interviews. Rehousing Manager confirmed support was available.	People do receive the support they need when it's identified. Support is available for people such as the blind and people with dementia. Loop system is available in council buildings. The website can change language and the text size can be also increase.	Housing Plus officer to use their knowledge of vulnerable people to support rehousing process where required.  Make sure staff training includes providing appropriate support.
1.7	Support for new tenants is positive.	Interview with staff carrying out Housing Plus role.  Non - English speaker tenant sign up.	New tenants are helped with practical issues for example utilities, rent and local facilities.  Tenant felt supported and made to feel welcome and language needs met.	Make available additional information for local services (schools, pharmacy, doctor, dentist and places of worship).
1.8	The move of the Property Shop to Howden House has reduced the space available for dedicated computers and help isn't as easily available.	Mystery Shops in Howden House compared to previous experience of the old Property Shop.	The customer focus, which was previously friendly, has reduced.  Customers can feel lost in Howden House and less help is available.	Improve signage and ensure customer service is friendly. New and improved signage is now available.
<b>2 INFORMATION</b>				
2.1	Limited or incorrect information is provided in some cases.	Mystery Shops 2 x Howden House 1 x Newfield Green 1 x Darnall 1 x Call Centre Staff interviews.	Customers are not always getting good support and advice from experienced and knowledgeable staff. Their situation may be made worse.	Training to increase knowledge of registration process. Test staff learning. Satisfaction survey to evaluate the impact of service on customers.
2.2	Lack of information (i.e. leaflets) available for customers to take away.	Mystery Shops 1 x Newfield Green 1 x Darnall 1 x Howden House.	Customers are directed to either Howden House or directed to the website. Customers who are digitally excluded feel isolated.	Ensure written information is available and refreshed at Housing Offices.

	What is the C4C Judgement?	What Evidence do we have to support that judgement?	What Impact is this having on customers?	Recommendation
2.3	Registering requires evidence of information that you don't know is required until you get to those questions.	Review and testing. Review of other sites.	Registering becomes a frustrating process and may cause delays while required information is sought. Can become stressful with the on-line time limits imposed.	At the beginning of the process let customers know what ID information they need to have with them.
2.4	Signage in both Howden House and Hillsborough is not clear.	Mystery Shops. Staff feedback.	It is confusing for customers who are not clear where to go. Possibility of wasting time in the wrong queue.	Put up clear signs for example 'Property Shop Enquiries – queue here'. Improve signage at the entrance to Howden House. There needs to be better understanding by the floor walkers regarding where to send customers. We understand this has now happened in Howden House.
2.5	Quality of information on the website is good and much improved.	Review of the website.	Customers should find it easy to use and understand.	
2.6	De-registration – Inconsistency of experiences and unreliable information.	Staff feedback on a frequent complaint is that “people don't receive letters” informing of need to confirm registration details; confirmed as per manager interview.  Experience of challenger' letter not being received.	Tenants feel scared that they've lost their waiting time. Tenants feel stressed that they now have to write a letter to explain.	If someone is still living in the same property give staff the authority to re-instate their waiting time (by not doing this challengers feel that extra work and upset is created to no value). E-mail out to tenants who prefer this format of communication; however send a letter first before emailing.
2.7	There are some issues with the use of electronic communication.	2 x email contacts.  Customer satisfaction survey.	Two emails sent and not answered leaving customers in limbo.	Improve processes for dealing with electronic communication to ensure an acknowledgement and answer is provided.

	What is the C4C Judgement?	What Evidence do we have to support that judgement?	What Impact is this having on customers?	Recommendation
<b>3 WEBSITE</b>				
<b>3.1</b>	<p>The new website is a significant improvement on the old one.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear and easy to use.</li> <li>• Additional area information is useful.</li> <li>• The look is uncluttered.</li> <li>• Can browse all properties without being logged in.</li> <li>• It compares well with other sites.</li> </ul>	<p>Review and testing of website.</p> <p>Comparison with other sites.</p>	<p>Customers who are IT literate will find the site easy to use and the additional area information will help customers choose an appropriate property.</p>	<p>On a web search if there are no properties available in that postcode area the website should say that, as well as giving nearby properties.</p>
<b>3.2</b>	<p>The site works well on a tablet and mobile phone.</p>	<p>Review and testing.</p> <p>Registration completed by a 76 year old.</p>	<p>Gives customers choice in how to access the website.</p> <p>Process was easy to follow.</p>	
<b>3.3</b>	<p>Accessibility issues have been considered – it quickly translates to alternative languages and is easy to change the size.</p>	<p>Review and customer testing in different languages.</p>	<p>Customers with specific needs using the website are having their needs met.</p>	



This document can be supplied in alternative formats, please contact:  
Sheffield City Council • Council Housing Service  
Tel: 0114 293 0000 or 205 3333  
[www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing)

This document is printed on paper from a sustainable source

This page is intentionally left blank



## Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017

---

**Report of:** Policy & Improvement Officer

---

**Subject:** Work Programme 2017/18

---

**Author of Report:** Alice Nicholson, Policy and Improvement Officer  
[alice.nicholson@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:alice.nicholson@sheffield.gov.uk)  
0114 273 5065

---

The updated work programme for 2017/18 is attached at Appendix 1 for the Committee's consideration and discussion.

The work programme has been updated with agenda items identified previously populated in meetings schedule, the remainder to be confirmed for 2017/18 meetings. To prioritise or update further the work programme the Committee may wish to reflect on the prioritisation principles attached at Appendix 3 to ensure that scrutiny activity is focussed where it can add most value. Appendix 2 provides a log of the issues looked at in 2014/16, 2015/16 & 2016/17.

Where an issue is not appropriate for inclusion on a meeting agenda, but there is significant interest from members, the Committee can choose to request a written briefing.

The work programme remains a live document and will be shared / discussed at each committee meeting.

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

- Consider and discuss the committee's remaining work programme for 2017/18
- Provide comment / feedback/agree the updated work programme

**Category of Report:** OPEN



**Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee**

**WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

**Last updated:** 4<sup>th</sup> September 2017

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

Topic	Reasons for selecting topic	Key contacts	Proposed scrutiny style
<b>Thursday 6th July 5-8 pm</b>			
<i>Hate Crime Task Group - initial response to the recommendations of the task group</i>	<i>Extract from Task Group report "The Committee would like to request that Cabinet provide an initial response to their recommendations by July 2017 with a more detailed progress report to be provided by the end of 2017"</i>	<i>Maxine Stavrianakos</i>	
<i>Hate Crime - verbal updates from partners</i>	<i>SYP Hate Crime Lead - update; Equality Hub Network</i>	<i>South Yorkshire Police - DCI Ian Proffitt - verbal update; EHN task group - verbal update from Magid Magid</i>	
<i>Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks</i>	<i>To receive an update on actions by Sheffield Council following Grenfell Tower fire</i>	<i>Jayne Dunn, Cabinet Member, Janet Sharpe, Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, Jill Hurst, Head of Housing Investment and Repairs,</i>	
<i>draft work programme 2017-18</i>		<i>Policy and Improvement Officer</i>	

<i><b>For information</b> - update report on Financial Inclusion Strategy</i>		<i>Cat Arnold</i>	
<i><b>For information</b> - Response to public questions</i>	<i>Response to public questions raised at 6th April meeting (2 No.)</i>	<i>Policy and Improvement Officer</i>	
<b>Thursday 14th September 4-7pm</b>			
Challenge for Change - Access to Rehousing Services	Consider report and presentation on the latest completed project	Tina Gilbert, Assistant Manager, Communities; Tenants	Single Agenda Item
Update on Welfare Reform	Receive an update on Welfare Reform, including Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments, Benefit Cap	Report of Director of Policy, Performance, Communications	Briefing paper
Tower Blocks Update - Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks	Receive for information an update on progress on actions by Sheffield Council since the Committee considered this item 6th July 2017	Report of Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Service	Briefing Paper
Work programme 2017-18		Policy and Improvement Officer	Standing Item

Thursday 12th October 4-7 pm			4th October
Community Safety - neighbourhood policing	Receive an update on neighbourhood policing now, including the combined Council/South Yorkshire Police team, and future direction -separate visit to Neighbourhood Policing Team	Maxine Stavrianakos/SYP	Agenda Item
Street Culture - Safe City	An introduction to what is Street Culture and services in Sheffield - to include begging, drinking, rough sleeping, the street economy	TBC	Agenda Item
Tower Blocks	Ongoing item to consider Tower Blocks Fire Safety, follow up to the scrutiny committee item July 2017: Invite representatives from emergency services and HSE; and to receive a report as requested by Full Council 5th July 2017 on safety implications of the Hanover Tower Block cladding and the need to reassure the public of the robustness of building safety frameworks.	TBC	Agenda Item
Work programme 2017-18 - PQs		Policy and Improvement Officer	Standing Item
Thursday 14th December 4-7 pm			6th December
Move to 18th January <i>Hate Crime Task Group - more detailed progress report</i>	<i>More detailed reporting on response to recommendations - may be rescheduled to January meeting</i>	<i>Jayne Dunn, Cabinet Member, Maxine Stavrianakos, Head of Neighbourhood Intervention &amp; Tenant Support</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>

Tower Blocks	Ongoing item to consider Tower Blocks Fire Safety, follow up to the scrutiny committee item July 2017: Invite representatives from emergency services and HSE	SYFR/HSE	Agenda Item
Community Safety - neighbourhood policing – focus on 101 service	Consider non hate crime and policing matters, including 101 service - broader what's happening to make Sheffield communities safer	SYP	Agenda Item
Work programme 2017-18 - PQs		Policy and Improvement Officer	Standing Item
<b>Thursday 18th January 4-7 pm</b>			<b>10th January</b>
Hate Crime Task Group - more detailed progress report	See July agenda item for details.		
Tower Blocks	Ongoing item to consider Tower Blocks Fire Safety - a follow up to the scrutiny committee item July 2017: Update on local activity in regard Sheffield residential blocks.	TBC	Agenda Item
Work programme 2017-18 - PQs		Policy and Improvement Officer	Standing Item
<b>Thursday 8th March 4-7 pm</b>			<b>28th February</b>
Tower Blocks	Ongoing item to consider Tower Blocks Fire Safety a follow up to the scrutiny committee item July 2017 - <b>current position on Grenfell Tower inquiry &amp; Building Regulations review</b>	Jayne Dunn & Janet Sharpe	

Housing +	A review and progress report - early 2018; current state of play, lessons and improvements		Briefing Paper or possibly agenda (link to other items)
Sheffield Cohesion Strategy	An update on progress and actions - strategy implementation		TBC
Scrutiny Annual Report 2017-18 Draft Content & Work Programme 2018-19	This report provides the Committee with a summary of its activities over the municipal year for inclusion in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2017-18. It also includes a list of topics which it is recommended be put forward for consideration as part of the 2018-19 Work Programme for this committee.	Policy and Improvement Officer	Agenda Item
<b>TASK GROUP</b>			
Dependent on resources and need			
<b>Possible topics to be scheduled</b>			
Youth Justice	Scrutiny focus to be developed - cross committee		TBC
Housing - evictions	Consider and test policy, process, costs		TBC
Neighbourhood Working - A New Approach for Sheffield	The committee received a report on 16th February		TBC

**Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee - Log of Topics**

Topic	Year	Month
Right to Buy Update report - Briefing Paper	2014/15	February
Police and Crime Panel Update	2014/15	November
The Housing+ Model and its Implementation	2014/15	September
Update for Challenge for Change Grass Cutting Report	2014/15	November
Police and Crime Panel Update	2014/15	March
Land Management Arrangements Within the HRA - Briefing Paper	2014/15	February
Welfare Reform - January 2015 Update - Briefing Paper	2014/15	February
Review of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM) - briefing paper	2014/15	July
Challenge for Change - Community Engagement	2014/15	September
Welfare Reform - November 2014 Update - Briefing Paper	2014/15	November
The Impact of Welfare Reform on Sheffield's Residents - Update March 2015	2014/15	March
Review of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM) - Briefing Paper	2014/15	November
Council House Building	2014/15	July
Progress on Implementation of the Allocations Policy	2014/15	March
Social Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract	2014/15	March
Right to Buy Update report - briefing paper	2014/15	March
Responding to Domestic and Sexual Abuse in Sheffield	2014/15	February
Call-In of Decision on 'Future Options for the Housing Repairs & Maintenance Service'	2014/15	March
Police and Crime Panel Update	2014/15	February
Review of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM) - briefing paper	2014/15	March
South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel – Joint Working Protocol Proposal	2014/15	September
The Impact of Welfare Reform on Sheffield's Residents	2014/15	July
Local Area Partnerships and Community Engagement - Briefing Paper	2014/15	November
Community Safety Update 2015	2014/15	February
Draft Work Programme	2014/15	July
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan Update 2015/16	2014/15	November
Welfare Reform - September 2014 Update	2014/15	September
Right to Buy Update November 2014 - Briefing Paper	2014/15	November
Right to Buy Update - September 2014	2014/15	September
Right to Buy Update report - briefing paper	2014/15	July

## Sheffield Council Scrutiny Selecting Scrutiny topics

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

- **P**ublic Interest  
The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny;
- **A**bility to Change / Impact  
Priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically have an impact on, and that will influence decision makers;
- **P**erformance  
Priority should be given to the areas in which the Council, and other organisations (public or private) are not performing well;
- **E**xtent  
Priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the city (geographical or communities of interest);
- **R**eplication / 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

This page is intentionally left blank



## Report to Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 14 September 2017

---

**Report of:** Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

---

**Subject:** Welfare Reform Update

---

**Author of Report:** Cat Arnold, Policy and Improvement Officer,  
[cat.arnold@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:cat.arnold@sheffield.gov.uk)

---

### Summary:

This update has been requested by the Safer & Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee. It sets out the most significant current and future benefit changes and provides some information about how they are being addressed by Sheffield City Council and its partners.

### Key updates:

- Approximately 3000 people are claiming **Universal Credit** in Sheffield at the moment. Full roll out is due to take place from **July 2018**. Budgeting and digital support is available for those moving on to Universal Credit.
- **Personal Independence Payments** have started to replace Disability Living Allowance in Sheffield. Evidence from Sheffield Citizens Advice indicates that, whilst some people are receiving larger awards as a result, the PIP process is leading to reduced awards and significant issues with complexity and inconsistency of decision-making for others.
- A lower **Benefit Cap**, which limits the amount of income an out-of-work family (including single families) can receive in benefits, took effect earlier this year, taking the number of households affected by the cap from **113** to **623** households. In total, those households who are affected by the reduced benefit cap contain **2,371 children**.

The briefing also includes updates on Under-Occupancy Rules (Bedroom Tax), Council Tax Support, Council Tax Hardship Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments, Local Assistance Scheme and Sheffield City Council tenants.

---

**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 on welfare reform.

---

**Background Papers:**

List any background documents (e.g. research studies, reports) used to write the report. Remember that by listing documents people could request a copy.

**Category of Report:** OPEN

---

# Welfare Reform Update

---

## 1. Introduction/Context

- 1.1 In January 2011, the Government began to implement the biggest change to the welfare system for 60 years.
- 1.2 This paper has been requested by the Safer & Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee. It sets out the most significant current and future benefit changes and provides some information about how they are being addressed by Sheffield City Council and its partners.
- 1.3 Key updates:
  - Approximately 3000 people are claiming **Universal Credit** in Sheffield at the moment. Full roll out is due to take place from **July 2018**. Budgeting and digital support is available for those moving on to Universal Credit.
  - **Personal Independence Payments** have started to replace Disability Living Allowance in Sheffield. Evidence from Sheffield Citizens Advice indicates that, whilst some people are receiving larger awards as a result, the PIP process is leading to reduced awards and significant issues with complexity and inconsistency of decision-making for others.
  - A lower **Benefit Cap**, which limits the amount of income an out-of-work family (including single families) can receive in benefits, took effect earlier this year, taking the number of households affected by the cap in Sheffield from **113** to **623** households. In total, those households who are affected by the reduced benefit cap contain **2,371 children**.
- 1.4 The briefing also includes updates on Under-Occupancy Rules (Bedroom Tax), Council Tax Support, Council Tax Hardship Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments, Local Assistance Scheme, and Sheffield City Council tenants.

## 2.0 Current and future welfare reforms

### 2.1 *Universal Credit*

- 2.1.1 Universal Credit (UC) was introduced in Sheffield on 18 January 2016. Eventually, UC will replace all working age income related benefits (Income Support, income related Employment and Support Allowance, income based Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit and Tax Credits), and claimants will receive one monthly payment of UC, which will be paid directly to the claimant, and will include an element for their housing costs. This means that the claimant is responsible for making sure they pay

their rent, whereas if they were previously claiming Housing Benefit, their Housing Benefit may have been paid directly to the claimant's landlord. Previously, all working age Council tenants who received Housing Benefit had their benefit paid directly into their rent account. Under UC, the default position will be that the credit is paid directly to the tenant on a monthly basis, and they are then responsible for paying their rent to their landlord.

- 2.1.2 At the moment, approximately 3000 customers are on UC across Sheffield. These are single, working age claimants who would have previously have made a claim for Jobseeker's Allowance. These customers are not necessarily all currently receiving money from UC – some will be in the UC system and able to receive benefit if their income falls below a certain level (e.g. if temporary work comes to an end).
- 2.1.3 Further roll out of UC in Sheffield is expected to start in July 2018. From the roll out, all new claims from working age customers for, or changes to, those benefits and credits that UC replaces, will be claims for Universal Credit.
- 2.1.4 Citizens Advice nationally has published a briefing on Universal Credit<sup>1</sup>, calling on the Government to halt the roll out of UC, citing concerns that people are waiting up to 12 weeks for their first payment without any income, the complexity of the system, and that people are not getting any help when the system fails them. Citizens Advice wants the Government to remove the 7 waiting days at the start of a claim and improve the support available to people so they can make ends meet. National housing bodies like ARCH (Association of retained council housing) have also written to Government asking them to delay roll out.
- 2.1.5 In Sheffield the Council has worked closely with the DWP to ensure that vulnerable customers receive the right advice and support. Funded via an annual grant, the Council have a Delivery Partnership with the DWP to provide services to claimants who need help with budgeting and online skills, and are working on a pilot to provide this on site at Job Centres. When full roll-out occurs we anticipate that we will provide the same kind of support on a bigger scale, although this will be dependent on funding from the DWP next year.
- 2.1.6 At the end of June, 664 *Council* tenants were claiming UC, with average rent arrears of £724. On average each claimant's rent arrears increases by 5 weeks' rent from the first date of claim. Claiming UC is a challenge for tenants who are expected to manage for up to 6 ½ weeks before their first UC payment is made. During this period claimants often have no means to pay rent and so accumulate rent arrears at the beginning of the claim. Intensive work by housing staff during the first claim period tends to contain the increase in arrears and over subsequent weeks tenants typically begin to reduce the debt.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://citizensadvicesheffield.org.uk/news/personal-independence-payment/>

2.1.7 We estimate 16,000 Council tenants will be claiming UC by 2022. We are currently assessing how we can mitigate the risk to the HRA from the impact of UC on rent arrears.

## 2.2 *Personal Independence Payments*

2.2.1 Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for adults and is being rolled out in Sheffield. All people on DLA have received or will receive a letter from the DWP letting them know when they need to claim PIP. People are not automatically moved from DLA on to PIP. PIP is to help towards some of the extra costs of their health condition or disability. It is based on how their condition affects them, not on what condition they have. PIP is for people aged from 16 years, and is gradually being applied to people up to 68 years. DLA will remain for children up to the age of 16. The DWP will contact young people as they approach 16 to explain what will happen.

2.2.2 Our understanding of the impacts in Sheffield so far is anecdotal. Sheffield Citizens Advice published a report in April which found the following:

- There are winners who receive more benefit and losers whose benefit is reduced, often substantially.
- More restrictive PIP criteria have adversely affected many disabled people with severe walking problems, with older people more likely to be adversely affected.
- A growing cohort of older people have no opportunity for a review of their benefit if their condition worsens<sup>2</sup>.
- The assessment process presents specific access problems for deaf clients and places particular strain on people with mental health issues.
- There is a question over the quality of decision making and the PIP process is far from easy to understand.

## 2.3 *Benefit Cap*

2.3.1 The Benefit Cap was originally introduced in Sheffield in August 2013, and limited the amount of income an out of work family, including single parents, could receive in certain benefits, including Housing Benefit but not including disability benefits.

2.3.2 For those households with a benefits income above the cap levels, the only benefit to be capped was their Housing Benefit (HB), thus increasing the amount of rent to be paid. In some cases the HB award was reduced to 50p per week. This is the minimum payment that can be made in order to allow those affected to make a claim for a Discretionary Housing Payments.

2.3.3 In November 2016, Government reduced the amount of the benefit cap from £26,000 per year to **£20,000 per year** for families and single parents, and to **£13,400**

---

<sup>2</sup> This is due to a quirk of the system: although people first assessed for PIP before turning 65 have the opportunity to get the Mobility component reassessed at a later date if their walking ability deteriorates, those whose first PIP assessment comes at age 65 or over must remain permanently on the Mobility rate they are awarded at that time, or with no Mobility award at all, with no subsequent opportunity for review or re-assessment, no matter how much worse their mobility becomes.

for single people, although those previously capped cases who were in receipt of Carers Allowance (around 30 households) were made exempt from the cap. All other households who were subject to the reduced cap had their Housing Benefit reduced in February 2017.

- 2.3.4 In Sheffield, **623<sup>3</sup> households** are having their Housing Benefit reduced as a result of the benefit cap. The split by tenure is: Council tenants 42%; Housing Association 26%; and Private-rented tenants 32%. In total, those households who are affected by the reduced benefit cap contain **2,371 children**.
- 2.3.5 The total annual reduction in Housing Benefit for those households is around £1.6m (£31,169 per week). This amounts to an average weekly reduction of £50.03 per household. The biggest reduction is £156.32 and the smallest is 4p. When these households move on to Universal Credit (at some point after July 2018), and the cap is fully applied, the reduction for some will be even greater – an initial estimate is that this further reduction will affect approximately 50 households in Sheffield.
- 2.3.6 SCC Revenue and Benefits Service and the Council Housing Service Income Management and Financial Inclusion Team attended events held by the DWP to advise households across all tenures who were affected by the cap, and have assisted those affected to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment and offered money advice. In addition, budgeting and other support is available to affected Council and social-rented tenants through their landlords.
- 2.3.7 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are being used to support 252<sup>4</sup> households affected by the Benefit Cap. This support is usually transitional, with the DHP amounts reducing over time but providing an opportunity for households to adjust to their new level of income. Further information about DHP is provided below.

## 2.4 *Under-occupancy Rules ('Bedroom Tax')*

- 2.4.1 The bedroom tax was introduced in April 2013 for social tenants, and meant that anyone who was deemed to be under-occupying their home by 1 bedroom saw the amount of their rent that was eligible for Housing benefit, reduced by 14%, and by 25% if they were under occupying their home by 2 or more bedrooms.
- 2.4.2 In Sheffield, **5,137<sup>5</sup> households** are currently affected by the bedroom tax, with 4,323 of these being subject to the 14% reduction, and 815 subject to the 25% reduction. The numbers of those affected in the city are staying quite steady over time.
- 2.4.3 3444 Council tenants currently have their housing benefit reduced by the bedroom tax, down from 5035 in April 2013. The housing service helps vulnerable tenants to claim DHP in order to continue to pay their rent. Last year £759K of DHP were

---

<sup>3</sup> Figures from end of June 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Over period 01/04/17–01/09/17, totalling £163,083.

<sup>5</sup> Figures from February 2017.

awarded to council tenants. In Q1 this year £306K has been awarded. The rehousing policy has been changed to give priority to those affected by the bedroom tax who wish to downsize and the Council Housing service assists vulnerable tenants where necessary. Help to move is also offered to tenants who do not have any other means of moving their belongings.

- 2.4.4 Many of the people affected by Under-occupancy Rules are supported by Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). However, the introduction of the revised benefit cap has placed additional demands on the DHP budget.

## *2.5 Council Tax Support and Council Tax Hardship Scheme (CTHS)*

- 2.5.1 In April 2013, the Government abolished Council Tax Benefit, and councils had to develop their own Council Tax Support Schemes. The Government also reduced the funding for Council Tax Support by 10% (in Sheffield, this was a cut of about £4.5m per year). The Government also protected pensioners from any reduction in support, which meant that means that all working age Council Tax Support recipients in Sheffield have to pay at least 23% of their Council Tax liability.

- 2.5.2 Due to the cut in support offered to working age Council Tax Support recipients, in April 2013 we introduced the Council Tax Hardship Scheme to offer further assistance to households who were experiencing financial hardship as a result of their Council Tax costs.

- 2.5.3 There are currently **51,622** households who receive Council Tax Support, and of these **30,373** are of working age.

- 2.5.4 In 2013/14, the Council made awards from the Council Tax Hardship Scheme totalling £410,000, it made awards totalling £590,000 in 2014/15. In 2015/16 the council made awards totalling £600,000 to 3,000 households. Due to the increase in Council Tax in 2016 (as a result of the inclusion of the Adult Social Care Precept) the budget for the Council Tax Hardship Scheme for 2016/17 was £800,000, and this increased to £1,000,000 for 2017/18.

## *2.6 Discretionary Housing Payments*

- 2.6.1 The Council administers the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme, which is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to provide assistance to households who are receiving Housing Benefit and are experiencing financial hardship as a result of the shortfall between their Housing Benefit and their rent costs. Following the Government's welfare reform program, the DHP grant allocated to Sheffield initially increased significantly in order to mitigate some of the cuts in Housing Benefit, in particular, the bedroom tax and the benefit cap.

- 2.6.2 In Sheffield, we have always spent the full amount allocated by DWP. Please see below for details of the DHP spend since 2012/13 (it is possible to see the increase in funding since the introduction of the bedroom tax and the benefit cap in 13/14):

- 2012/13 - £239,714
- 2013/14 - £1,225,802
- 2014/15 - £1,040,816
- 2015/16 - £958,791
- 2016/17 - £1,087,495
- 2017/18 - £1,453,560

2.6.3 The amount the Council receives in DHP funding means that it is unable to offer financial assistance to all the households who have been affected by the Government's welfare reform agenda.

## 2.7 *Local Assistance Scheme*

2.7.1 The Local Assistance Scheme (LAS) is run by the Council and replaces the Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants that were previously available from the DWP. The LAS provides grants to help people as a result of an emergency or crisis, or to help them establish themselves in the community or to ease exceptional pressure, and can be awarded for household furniture and other essentials.

2.7.2 The LAS has recently been reviewed and the following changes have been made to the scheme:

2.7.3 Instead of providing crisis loans via Sheffield Credit Union, LAS now provides **Sheffield Crisis Grants**, which follow the same criteria as the Local Assistance Loans except that they do not have to be repaid.

2.7.4 LAS now provides tickets and make arrangements for travel instead of awarding cash. Tickets for bus and trams are available for travel within Sheffield and South Yorkshire and are delivered through the Cashiers based in Howden House. There are also options for booking taxis and train tickets when appropriate. Payments for removal costs remain as cash awards but payments are sent directly to the removal company via BACS transfer.

2.7.5 Utility payments for Gas and Electric, however, remain as cash, having been identified as the most responsive and effective method to meet this need.

2.7.6 Local Assistance Grants have been renamed **Sheffield Independence Grants**. Individuals under exceptional pressure are now considered in addition to families for these grants. Applications from customers who are assessed to have insufficient income, including those not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, are now considered (previously customers had to be receiving certain benefits to qualify).

2.7.7 Customers in need of financial advice will be signposted to the Sheffield Citizens Advice, and Sheffield Credit Union as required. Customers who are unhappy with the outcome on their application can now request a review of the decision, as an alternative to following the corporate complaints procedure.

## *2.8 Sheffield City Council Tenants*

- 2.8.1 Welfare Reforms continue to impact on many Council tenants ability to pay their rent, the Council Housing Service continue to support tenants in a variety of way to maximise their income and rent payments.
- 2.8.2 Tenants who suffer hardship from welfare reforms can obtain one off payments to their rent arrears from the HRA Hardship Fund which is used to stop further legal action. Last year the fund awarded £153K in payments making an estimated saving of £270K, in Q1 £50,300 was paid saving an estimated £104,700. The housing service also helps tenants impacted by welfare reforms by supporting debt support through the Citizens Advice Sheffield and Budgeting Accounts through the Credit Union.
- 2.8.3 Details of how Council tenants have been affected by specific benefit changes have been included in the narrative above.

## *2.9 Private-rented Tenants*

- 2.9.1 It should be noted that tenants in private-rented accommodation do not get the level of support – and from their landlords than those in social-rented accommodation are able to access. They are therefore more likely to rely on voluntary sector organisations or be harder hit by benefit changes.

## **3.0 Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the update on welfare reform.

This page is intentionally left blank



## Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017

**Report of:** Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Service

**Subject:** **Tower Blocks Update – Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks**

**Author of Report:** Jill Hurst, Head of Housing Investment and Repairs  
0114 2735933

**Summary:**

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017 received an update on actions by Sheffield Council following Grenfell Tower fire. This item for information is a progress update on subsequent actions by Sheffield Council in regard Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks.

**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	<b>X</b>
Other	

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**  
Note the Report

**Background Papers:** None

**Category of Report:** OPEN

## **Progress Update to Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee – Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks**

**September 2017**

### **General**

- There are 24 council owned blocks over six storeys in the city, 3 are brick clad and 21 have rain screen cladding.
- During July all tower blocks had a full new Fire Risk Assessment undertaken and remedial works will be completed by the end of September by the insourced repairs service.
- Consultation on installing sprinklers and closing bin chutes will commence in the Autumn.

### **Hanover**

- One block Hanover failed the initial Building Research Establishment (BRE) cladding test (June 2017).
- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue inspected the block and agreed residents could remain in occupation as long as fire wardens remained in place until cladding was removed.
- Residents were offered temporary rehousing but only one resident has taken up this offer.
- Approval was given to commence removal of the cladding at the end June and by 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017 all the cladding and insulation will be removed.
- In late July 2017 the government requested that BRE undertake full cladding system tests and Hanover tower block failed this test. Nationally all blocks with the same system material composition as Hanover failed the test.
- The government reinforced the message to landlords to take mitigating action to keep residents safe. 24/7 security remains in place on Hanover but will end once the cladding removal is complete.
- The Hanover Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) were advised of the test result within 24 hrs of the result being notified to Sheffield City Council (SCC).
- Housing Officers continue to attend weekly surgeries at the TARA office.
- On 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017 Housing Officers will attend the first meeting with the TARA project group to discuss the next steps
- An initial discussion has taken place with Planning Officers regarding replacement cladding designs
- Cladding work is unlikely to commence until Spring 2018.

### **Other Blocks with Rain screen Cladding**

- 21 other tower blocks with aluminium cladding were sampled by Sheffield University and these tests confirmed that the cladding did not contain any composite material and so no further action has been necessary

- To reassure residents we also had the insulation material tested and this proved to be safe.
- Mid August we wrote to all residents and they were advised of the test results.

### **Non Council Residential Blocks**

- Sheffield has been notified by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that 4 blocks in the city that submitted cladding samples also failed the cladding system tests.
- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service have inspected these blocks and have confirmed to SCC that these building owners are taking action to mitigate the risk of fire on these blocks.
- Housing officers are continuing to build a database of high rise blocks in the city. Responses have been received from 25% of building owners.

### **South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue**

- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (SYFRS) inspected all out tower blocks during June / July
- These inspections did not identify any serious weaknesses of approach
- Sheffield Council has responded to a letter from the Fire Service that asked Sheffield to consider some changes / improvement work to further protect residents
- SYFRS have accepted Sheffield Councils plan of action to change ventilation on three tower blocks and to review its inspection regime. Work is well underway to address these issues.
- The Stay Put policy is still applicable taking into account the fire precaution measures we have on our blocks. In some parts of the country changes have been made but SYFRS are satisfied that Sheffield can continue its approach to Stay Put given the previous investment work that has been undertaken.

### **National Developments**

- Sheffield has written to DCLG and made an initial request for funding to re-clad Hanover tower block.
- Sheffield has participated in regular discussions with the Building Safety Team (DCLG) and other local authorities and are pressing for urgent clarity on what cladding systems can be safely used on high rise blocks. Guidance has been promised later this month.
- Sheffield and others are also seeking clarity from government on whether additional resources will be forthcoming to allow local authorities to proactively inspect high rise properties on a planned basis using the powers under the Housing Act 2004.
- The government have commissioned a full enquiry into the Grenfell Fire and also a review of Building Regulations relating to fire safety
- The initial findings of the Grenfell fire are expected by Christmas.
- The Building Regulations review is expected to report in Spring 2018.

This page is intentionally left blank