

# SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

## Climate Change, Economy and Development Transitional Committee

### Meeting held 10 March 2022

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mark Jones (Chair), Barbara Masters (Deputy Chair),  
Tim Huggan, Dianne Hurst, Douglas Johnson, Chris Rosling-Josephs,  
Martin Smith and Paul Turpin

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#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neale Gibson and Mazher Iqbal.

#### **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 Councillor Paul Turpin declared a personal interest in item 7 of the agenda (item 6 of these minutes), 'Climate Change Action Plan - Domestic Retrofit: Concluding Session' by virtue of him being a Director of an insulation company.

#### **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2022, and arising therefrom:

(a) Item 5.2.5, members asked for details of the written response to Ms Carpenter on her question relating to Carbon Literacy Training; and

(b) Item 5.3.2, members asked for details of the written response to Ms Ashe on her question relating to climate change issues being addressed through Sheffield's Local Plan.

4.12 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee:-

(a) approves the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2022, as a correct record;

(b) requests a copy of the written response given by Mark Whitworth (Sustainability and Climate Change Service Manager), to Ms Carpenter, to include details of the content of the online training; and

(c) requests a copy of the written response given by Simon Vincent (Local

Plan Service Manager) to Ms Ashe.

4.2 Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2022

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2022.

With regard to Item 5.22 (e), Councillor Masters read out a letter that had been drafted to the Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change and the Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, COP26 President, requesting that the Government work jointly with Sheffield City Council to understand the retrofitting needs of Sheffield's housing stock.

4.21 RESOLVED: that the Committee:-

(a) approves the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2022, as a correct record; and

(b) gives approval for the letter as seen to be sent to Government ministers, with the Chair, Deputy Chair and Councillor Wood (as Co-operative Executive Member for Housing, Roads and Waste Management) as signatories, and for the letter to be shared with Core City local authorities.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 There were no public questions or petitions received from members of the public.

**6. CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN - DOMESTIC RETROFIT: CONCLUDING SESSION**

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Head of Strategic Transport, Sustainability and Infrastructure detailing the key points from the Domestic Retrofit Working Group evidence gathering sessions. The report also outlined the next steps in the process.

6.2 In attendance for this item were Tom Finnegan-Smith (Head of Strategic Transport, Sustainability and Infrastructure) Mark Whitworth (Sustainability and Climate Change Service Manager) and Jill Hurst (Head of Housing Investment and Repairs).

6.3 Mark Whitworth confirmed that after hearing evidence from external organisations, key areas for discussion with the Committee had been identified. This would help to inform the Plan, identify the work needed to implement this and the expected outcomes.

6.4 The key themes for members of the Committee to consider were:

1. To clarify the Council's approach to funding to enable officers to maximise the benefit of available resources and to get bids 'in the bottom drawer',

including how to utilise opportunities such as Levelling Up;

2. Regional collaborative approach was key to increasing buying power for successful grant bids and maximising skills development;
3. Addressing cost and benefit was critical for private rented tenure, improving engagement, having the right tools to support action and engaging landlords to participate in retrofit;
4. Engaging with residents early to test generic assumptions, barriers, and willingness of local population;
5. Understanding the city's property stock and archetype; understanding the maintenance schedule;
6. Targeting 'ready-to-act' through the development of an informed homeowner offering for those able and willing to act now could begin to support retrofit in homeowner occupant tenure, enable scale up of activity, and development of the sector with a view to drive down costs; and
7. Building skills and supply chain was crucial to enable delivery at scale and at an affordable cost. The Council had roles in procuring housing works, setting regulatory standards and in supporting the development of skills.

6.5 Mr Whitworth reminded the Committee that they were being asked to:

- Reflect on the evidence provided to it in the February meetings;
- Consider if the key themes identified were correct; and
- Provide a report to Officers and to the subsequent Committee (or Committees) to outline the current position and to make advisory recommendations for actions to continue, improve and accelerate activity.

6.6 Mr Whitworth advised that funding offers often came with a very short turnaround time, and resources were needed to maximise funding opportunities. Collaborative/regional approaches were very important in terms of securing funding and maximising wider opportunities, including skills. It was also important to engage early with residents and maximise their support in the process. Manchester had been a good example of how residents had powered a successful retrofit programme. In terms of building skills and the supply chain, options were being considered to increase the scale across the city and the region at an affordable price.

6.7 The Chair noted that the evidence provided had been helpful and believed it had been useful to hear experiences from other regions.

6.8 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The ongoing work being carried out by Sheffield City Council had not been mentioned in the report, nor had the details of the lessons that were being learned during the process. This was noted by officers and the Committee

was advised that a final report would be produced which would include this, along with summaries of the three sessions that had taken place.

- From a practical perspective, the Local Authority Delivery scheme had made some funding available. An understanding of the potential for barriers and unwillingness from tenants was needed, and it was also important to give residents more information about the benefits of retrofitting works and how incremental improvements could be made. It was also necessary to ensure that private sector colleagues were involved in these conversations. There was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that some residents were concerned that housing of a certain age would not benefit from cavity wall insulation. Learning from the experience of other local authorities, it was agreed that conversations and engagement with residents should begin early in the process. The importance of linking conversations with consultants was highlighted to ensure that engagement took place as opportunities arose.
- It was acknowledged that there was a challenge of achieving strategic objectives whilst funding would always be limited. Nottingham was an example where significant improvements had been made to a small number of houses. The decision around 'broad' versus 'deep' retrofitting would depend on which would deliver the biggest and quickest improvements in the city. There seemed to be a gap in the analysis and evidence so far and as such, in determining a strategic position. In an effort to accelerate works a starting point could be to work on properties that had fewer complications. In order to achieve 'net zero' there would need to be a balance in terms of a 'broad' versus a 'deep' approach. Work would be undertaken during quarter 3 to address the absence of that strategy and analysis. The results from an initial piece of work on this would be received by July, 2022 and would then be analysed. A maintenance plan could then be prepared, aiming to align retrofitting with maintenance. The annual investment planning process would begin in Quarter 3 and there would be a separate piece of work to look at private sector housing. There would also be information following the Housing and Neighbourhood Service undertaking additional stock condition surveys of both Council owned stock and private sector housing stock condition survey work to provide an update on energy performance especially in the private sector.
- One of the components for the Co-operative Executive to consider as part of the Draft 10-Point Plan For Climate Change Action was a 'housing decarbonisation roadmap', being prepared by Housing and Neighbourhood Services. This would be informed by the work being carried out by Housing and Neighbourhood Services who were working with other housing providers in the city, and would include initiatives aimed at improving the condition of housing stock.
- It was important to be aware of the challenge of supporting those in fuel poverty whilst trying to provide a wider benefit, and to consider the criteria on which wider benefit were defined.

- It was noted that multiple approaches were needed but that finance and resources were limited. A suggestion was made to provide a 'rag rating' evaluation of officer capacity to deliver schemes in order to inform the new policy committee.
- Despite recent backlogs within Housing Maintenance, there was an appetite for re-training of the repairs service and to learn about new technologies. Investment into retraining was needed across the whole of the construction sector to ensure there was a technical understanding of retrofitting options. This was a challenge nationally and would require work with other organisations to ensure that all technical and trade staff were suitably skilled.
- In terms of efforts to engage landlords and housing associations, a Strategic Housing Forum was held monthly, and which all registered landlords were invited to. This forum took the format of topic-based discussions, and landlords had contributed their strategies and plans. Officers would be following up on this. More recently, round 2 of the Local Authority Delivery Scheme had invited bids for funding. Local authorities were deemed as lead partners and reached out to housing associations to see if they were interested in being part of a bid. A few did wish to be included but after looking to their national boards for steer on their strategy, then decided to withdraw. The National Fair Housing Alliance was currently in the process of lobbying the Government to try and influence grant regimes. South Yorkshire Housing Association had submitted a bid during round one, but their Board decided not to commit and withdrew finances so the scheme did not proceed.
- There had been some good examples of opportunities to work with partners. For example, Sanctuary Housing had shown a successful collaboration between the housing industry and social landlords, working together to transform the lives of people living in poverty. There were also ongoing discussions with South Yorkshire Housing Association regarding their similar programmes. The Strategic Housing Forum was an opportunity to talk to partners and to set out ambitions.
- Lessons had been learned from the Decent Homes programme which had improved 39,000 Council homes but where around 7% of tenants had chosen to decline work to their homes (mainly due to tenant vulnerability and disruption given extent of Decent Homes work), meaning that some houses were now not at the required standard. It was also important to consider future occupants of a property. Additionally, if a landlord was not able to let a property due to it not meeting energy performance requirements, this would become a compliance matter. As such there would be a legal obligation to do the works. There were minimum standards that had to be adhered to, set by the Government. Engagement was the key to encouraging unwilling tenants.
- There was a clear commitment from the Council to the 10 Point Climate Change Action Plan, which was scheduled to be considered at the Co-

operative Executive meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2022. It would then be important to embed action across the Council from strategy through to delivery. There was now greater capacity around climate change and sustainability, but as there would be an overlap of budgets, collaboration on time and resources would be needed between different services. A rollout of training to support this was also required.

- In response to a suggestion to explore different finance approaches to ensure that any benefits realised from retrofitting were realised by the Council it was noted that this formed part of the further work to be carried out, ie investment propositions and the way in which they would be financed. There was a full spectrum of funding opportunities via external funding, bidding for grants, or via investment choices.
- Housing had commissioned Rider Levett Bucknall to support the Housing and Neighbourhood Service looking at stock, and skills and capacity, and this would help to determine the retrofit approach and would be asset property based. It was necessary to consider the driver; was it carbon or poverty, and this would lead to wider conversations.
- Current procurement contracts were only for housing in Council ownership, but Housing is facilitating the opportunities for homeowners to negotiate works with contractors which has worked successfully on other capital programmes like roofing replacements. Other local authorities were looking at how to encourage and include other homeowners, and this was also being considered in Sheffield. However, any alternative approaches would need to be assessed based on risk to the Council.
- In order to ensure that ongoing maintenance was not neglected during retrofitting, an investment planning review would be carried out in quarter 3 which would help to give a balance of priorities. A five-year Housing Investment Programme, approved by Executive Co-operative, is being delivered and this includes recently commenced work to replace kitchens and bathrooms, roofs, electrical, external wall insulation and heating works.
- It was noted that there might be concerns from some tenants that their rents could increase following retrofitting. A number of different scenarios and customer profiles were currently being considered to help form a strategy on policy decisions, and options such as 'right to buy' would be included as part of this.
- There was a permissions policy procedure in place which included consideration on what permission could and couldn't be given for. Site surveys and checks were made to ensure that thermal barriers not been breached. No specific complaints had been received, but the significant challenge on the next scheme was likely to be around the number of conservatories and outbuildings that had been attached without permissions that may need to be taken down if found to be compromising the fabric of the building

6.9 A discussion took place between Committee members on the key themes listed in point 6.4, summarised as follows:

- The key themes (1-7) were largely correct;
- Clarity was needed in the report that the key themes (1-7) were not ranked in order of priority;
- Engagement was considered to be an important key theme and should be reinforced throughout the report. In particular to accelerate conversations around barriers (perceived versus actual);
- It was important to focus on Sheffield City Council housing stock; and
- Clarity was needed in the report that urgency is paramount.

6.10 RESOLVED: that the Committee:-

- (a) requests the Policy and Improvement Officer provide a report outlining the current position and with advisory recommendations for actions to continue, improve and accelerate activity, for approval by Committee members, for the subsequent Committee (or Committees); and
- (b) expresses its thanks to officers for the work undertaken by officers on the 10 Point Climate Change Action Plan.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE, ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT TRANSITIONAL COMMITTEE ACTIVITY REPORT MARCH 2022**

7.1 The Committee received and noted a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) containing details of the activity undertaken, and setting out the topics which the Committee had considered during the Municipal Year 2021/2022..