

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Housing Policy Committee

Meeting held 9 June 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Douglas Johnson (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Paul Wood (Group Spokesperson), Sue Auckland, Fran Belbin, Ben Curran, Denise Fox, Maleiki Haybe and Sophie Thornton

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1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the housekeeping.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Safiya Saeed.

3. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 The following petitions and questions were received and responses were provided.

5.2 Lead Petitioner: Anonymous

The Council has received a petition containing 15 signatures, demanding an effective deterrent to be installed to prevent doves nesting on the council building block on Harrowden Road.

“We the tenants at Harrowden Road, Sheffield S9 who occupy the council building sign this petition against Sheffield City Council to demand that an effective deterrent is installed to prevent feral doves from nesting on the block.

Over 40+ doves use the maisonette building to nest, breed, wake tenants at dawn and leave concentrated droppings on balconies and ledges where they roost. This poses a serious risk to our health and well being because the birds carry diseases that are airborne and can be transferred to humans just by being around droppings. They are a hazard to tenants under the Housing Health and Safety System, as well as a statutory nuisance.

We the tenants demand that Sheffield City Housing fully fund and put in place a deterrent before the end of the financial year 2022/23.”

The Chair acknowledged the petition and explained that he understood housing officers were now looking to investigate the issue to see what could be done.

5.3 A question was received from Emily Procter:

“Ahead of the Housing Policy Committee meeting on 9/6/22 at 10am, I have a question that I would like to ask.

I privately rent in Broomhill, and have faced problems with my landlord not providing a clean flat, and not fixing things quickly enough. Many of my friends in Crookes have faced the same problems. Do you support the introduction of a selective landlord licensing scheme in Crookes and Broomhill, as called for by Sheffield Labour Students?”

Any tenant experiencing issues with poor property condition or concerns relating to management can report them to Private Housing Standards who will investigate. However, it is important that tenants, in the first instance, report repairs etc to their landlord to give them the opportunity to carry out necessary works.

The Chair responded to the question and explained that in order to apply to introduce a Selective Licensing scheme, Private Housing Standards must gather evidence to prove that the issues in the area are serious and extensive and meet the conditions as set out in the Government guidance.

It was explained that the Council are happy to explore the need for selective licensing schemes where it can be clear that there is a need and would welcome a conversation with Sheffield Labour Students to discuss this further.

5.4 A question was received from Geoff Cox.

“Will this committee recommend that SCC finds the funding to set up a Home Insulation and Renewable Domestic Energy Advice Centre to replace and enhance the now disbanded South Yorkshire Energy Centre? Sheffield needs a suitably resourced independent service that can give impartial, trusted advice to home owners on decarbonising their own properties. The Centre should be resourced to respond to the needs of an increasing number of home owners - focussing on the assessment of properties, engaging suitably qualified contractors and the availability of grants, loans, etc. An identical question is being asked of the Regeneration, Transport and Climate Change Committee.”

The Chair acknowledged the question and explained that it would be passed on for officers to look into.

6. HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

6.1 The Director of Housing gave a presentation on the Housing and Neighbourhood services. The presentation included information on:

- Roles and responsibilities

- Structures
- Partnerships
- Vision
- Strategic Approach
- Investment and Growth
- 5 Year Capital Programme
- Council housing
- Neighbourhood and Tenancy Enforcement
- Review of Housing Plus approach
- Specialist housing and support
- New specialist accommodation
- Key performance indicators
- Challenges moving forwards
- Customer Engagement Strategy
- Supporting the next generation of staff

Members of the Committee asked questions and responses were provided by Janet Sharpe surrounding specialist homes, right to buy applications, demands for social housing, repairs, consequences of stock reductions, significant demands for emergency and temporary accommodation and housing strategy provision across tenures.

The committee were asked to note the presentation.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

- 7.1 Alice Nicholson presented the Work Programme and informed Committee that this would be a regular item and although it contained suggestions for what it may contain, it was up to the Committee to decide. Appendix 3 of the report contained the actual work programme which would be visible to the public.

The forthcoming programme was summarised and it was highlighted that the committee has many items that needed addressing.

Members raised points and questions and responses were provided by Janet Sharpe surrounding retro fitting, fortnightly knowledge briefings, letting agents, student accreditation and available interventions within the city. Tom smith supported exploring ways to provide useful data and information and suggested for an informal meeting to discuss further. It was also explained that access opportunities were being explored alongside the customer review that is already underway.

Alice Nicholson reminded that the purpose of pre-agenda meetings would be to inform future work plans.

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that:

1. With reference to issues raised in this report, consideration be given to any further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Appendix 3.
2. That the committee's work programme as set out in Appendix was agreed.
3. That consideration be given to any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion in part 6 of the next work programme report, for potential addition to the work programme.

8. MONTH 1 MONITORING, FINANCIAL POSITION AND BUDGET TIMETABLE REVENUE AND MONITORING REPORT

8.1 The report brought the Committee up to date with the Council's financial position as at Month 1 2022/23. The report also reported the proposed budget timetable for the development of the 2023/24 budget

8.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Housing Policy Committee:-

1. Note the Council's challenging financial position and the Month 1 position.
2. Note the budget timetable set out in this report including the requirement for the Committee to plan to develop budget proposals over the course of the summer.
3. Note that the Strategy and Resources Committee was recommended at its 31 May 2022 meeting to "require any Policy Committee that is forecasting an overspend on their budget to develop an action plan to address the overspend in-year and ask the Finance Sub-Committee to monitor both the development of any required action plans and delivery against them".
4. Commission work from Officers to develop and implement plans to mitigate the overspend in the Housing Revenue Account and deliver stalled savings plans to bring forecast outturn back in line with budget

8.3 Reasons for Decision

8.3.1 By the law the Council must set and deliver a balanced budget, which is a financial plan based on sound assumptions which shows how income will equal spend over the short- and medium-term. This can take into account deliverable cost savings and/or local income growth strategies as well as useable reserves.

8.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 8.4.1 The Council is required to both set a balance budget and to ensure that in-year income and expenditure are balanced. No other alternatives were considered.

9. **RENT RECOVERY POLICY**

- 9.1 To seek authority to update the Rent Arrears Recovery Policy. The changes to the policy will ensure that the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) monies continue to be collected in a timely manner, with a bigger emphasis on prevention and support, trying to stop people falling into arrears in the first place. This income is used to provide comprehensive tenancy and estate management services for all Council tenancies, Council housing repairs, regulatory compliance and delivery of capital investment programmes to improve the quality of homes and assets held in the HRA account. It enables Sheffield City Council to meet its statutory and regulatory responsibilities to continue the provision of providing decent homes to council tenants and equality of opportunity for people to have affordable housing to live in.

9.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Housing Policy Committee:-

1. Consider the results of the consultation and have due regard to the feedback in reaching their decision.
2. Approves the changes to the current Rent Arrears Recovery Policy.

9.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 9.3.1 The changes to the Rent Arrears Recovery Policy will ensure that the Council's Housing Revenue Account monies continue to be collected in a timely manner. They will enable Sheffield City Council to continue the provision of providing a good quality home to council tenants, and equality of opportunity for people to access a suitable affordable home to meet their needs.

9.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 9.4.1 Not updating the policy could result in a reduction of service and support to tenants to maximise their income and sustain their tenancies. This could ultimately result in increased arrears and reduced income to the Housing Revenue Account.