

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Housing Policy Committee

Meeting held 20 June 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Douglas Johnson (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Alison Norris (Group Spokesperson), Mike Chaplin, Gail Smith, Paul Turpin, Alan Woodcock and Karen McGowan (Substitute Member)

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mia Drazaic. Councillor Karen McGowan attended the meeting as her substitute.

4. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

4.1 It was noted that the appendices to item 11 on the agenda were not available to the public or press because they contained exempt information. If Members wished to discuss the information in the appendices, the Committee would ask the members of the public and press to kindly leave for that part of the meeting and the webcast would be paused.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

5.1 No declarations of interest were received.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

6.1 The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 21st March and 15th May, 2024 were approved as a correct record.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement on the Committee's Work Programme detailing all known, substantive agenda items for forthcoming meetings of the Committee, to enable this committee, other committees, officers, partners, and the public to plan their work with and for the Committee.

7.1.1 Suggestions were made by members for future inclusions and scheduling amendments to the committee's work programme including;

- The implementation plan for the path to net zero to be brought to the October committee meeting.
- The temporary accommodation strategy be brought forward as a matter of urgency. Officers agreed to provide briefings to members as soon as possible.
- The timeline for building and refurbishing Council homes to be added to the work programme with the inclusion of a timeline.

7.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Housing Policy Committee:-

1. That the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1;

7.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 7.3.1 To give the committee members an opportunity to consider the direction of the work programme, align it with their key priorities and create a manageable workload for the committee.

7.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 7.4.1 None

8. **2023/24 FINAL BUDGET OUTTURN MONITORING REPORT**

- 8.1.1 The report provided an update on the final outturn position for Sheffield City Council's revenue budget for 2023/24.

- 8.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Housing Policy Committee notes the updated information and management actions on the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Outturn as described in the report.

8.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 8.3.1 To record formally changes to the Revenue Budget.

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. **HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME - 2023/24 QUARTER 4 UPDATE ON THE APPROVED 5 YEAR PROGRAMME**

- 9.1.1 Members considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services providing a quarterly update on progress against the approved 2023/24 Housing Capital Programme. The report focussed on providing an update on expenditure and progress against the 2023/24 Housing Capital Programme position at the end of March 2024 (Quarter 4). The report also provided an update of the 5-year Housing Capital Programme (2023/24 – 2027/28).

- 9.1.2 A question was asked regarding the commencement of building at the Newstead General Housing Scheme in the Birley Ward and officers agreed to find this information and provide it to members after the meeting. An officer also confirmed the start date of the external refurbishment works on Edward Street as March 2025.

- 9.1.3 Officers were asked to provide start dates and indicative costs for all the projects listed in paragraph 2.5 of the report and it was agreed that these would be provided in writing after the meeting.

9.1.4 The Chair requested that the table in paragraph 2.4 be adjusted to separate out the carbon reduction elements from the heating and energy one, as was done for the HRA business plan, and for these to be recirculated to all members.

9.1.5 A query was raised regarding the start date for building work on the Older Persons Independent Living (OPIL) scheme in Gleadless Valley and also changes to the budget for the Gleadless Valley Masterplan. Officers agreed to look into this and provide an answer after the meeting.

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

- Notes the 2023-24 Housing Capital Programme outturn and budget position at the end of quarter 4.
- Notes the update provided for the 5-year Housing Capital Programme (2023/24 – 2027/28)

9.3 **Reasons for Decision**

9.3.1 This report is to provide the Housing Policy Committee members with an update on progress against the 5-year approved Capital programme at the end of Qtr. 4 2023/24.

9.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

9.4.1 No alternative options are considered as part of this update report.

10. **NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT POLICY**

10.1.1 Members considered a report of the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services seeking formal approval for the implementation of a new Neighbourhood Management Policy. This policy aligns with the Neighbourhood & Community Standard as stipulated by the latest Regulator of Social Housing Regulations, which were introduced on 1st April 2024.

10.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Housing Policy Committee:-

1. approves the content of the Neighbourhood Management Policy to ensure that our neighbourhood management practices support the new regulatory framework.
2. grants delegated authority to the Director of Housing to make any necessary changes required to Section 2 of the policy regarding Annual Visits, upon the completion of the Annual Visit Steering Group Review, as required.

10.3 **Reasons for Decision**

10.3.1 It is recommended that the Housing Policy Committee approve the draft proposed NMP because it aligns with regulatory requirements, is backed by expert advice, provides operational clarity, focuses on community well-being, and integrates various neighbourhood management aspects into a unified policy. The intended outcomes are improved service delivery, tenant empowerment, and enhanced neighbourhood environments.

10.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

10.4.1 In the development of the NMP, H&NS has evaluated the upcoming regulatory changes and the current operational practices. After careful consideration, it was decided that no alternative options would be pursued. The decision to proceed without alternatives is based on the following:

- The NMP directly addresses the new consumer standards, ensuring compliance.
- The policy provides a framework that covers various aspects of neighbourhood management, making it unnecessary to consider separate policies.
- Housing Quality Network (HQN), a reputable consultancy in the housing sector, assisted us in undertaking a self-assessment and recommended the NMP. Their expertise in the field lends significant weight to the recommendation.
- The NMP aims to clarify roles and responsibilities, which is expected to improve service delivery and tenant satisfaction.
- The policy emphasises tenant involvement and community safety, which are important for creating a positive living environment.

11. **SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION TO THE REGULATOR AND HOUSING OMBUDSMAN**

11.1.1 The Housing Ombudsman and Regulator of Social Housing have both introduced new statutory reporting requirements for all social housing providers. These are:

- The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code Self-Assessment
- The Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Members considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services providing an overview of the reporting requirements for each of these areas and outlining Sheffield City Council's proposed response to both the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing prior to the submission deadlines on 30th June 2024.

11.1.2 It was noted that there were some final figures to update in relation to material complaints due to a time lag before the final submission could be made.

11.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Housing Policy Committee:-

- Notes the outcomes of the complaints self-assessment against the Code in Appendix A
- Notes the contents of the Complaints and Service Improvement report in Appendix B
- Notes the Council's TSM performance scores as set out in Appendix C
- Provides any comments or feedback on the proposed submissions contained in this report
- Approves the contents of the proposed new statutory reporting requirements, subject to the inclusion of the outstanding data on material

complaints, to be provided prior to the submission deadline.

11.3 Reasons for Decision

11.3.1 The Housing Policy Committee has delegated authority to monitor housing performance including complaints to ensure the service is delivering for tenants.

11.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

11.4.1 Self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Code and publication of the outcomes and accompanying report, are a requirement of all social housing landlords. Reporting of TSMs is also a statutory requirement for all social housing landlords, therefore no other alternatives were considered.

12. APPROVAL TO UTILISE £4.5M OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FUNDING FOR STOCK CONDITION SURVEYS AND APPRAISAL WORK

12.1.1 Members considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services seeking approval to utilise £4.5m of the Housing Revenue Account funding in order to commission circa 15,000 Stock Condition Surveys and associated stock appraisals by the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

12.1.2 The level of Council housing stock with full stock condition information was less than 50%. A number of council housing estates had been identified as requiring major investment and therefore there was a requirement to undertake more detailed stock surveys and investment appraisal work.

12.1.3 Discussion took place on the surveys, whether they would be carried out using a statutory assessment form, or the Council's own criteria. Members queried whether recommendations would be provided with the results of the survey, similar to those on an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). Officers confirmed that the Housing Health and Safety Risk System (HHSRS) would be used as the standard for the surveys and agreed to provide a briefing session for members.

12.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Housing Policy Committee grants approval to utilise £4.5m of the Housing Revenue Account funding in order to commission circa 15,000 Stock Condition Surveys and associated stock appraisals by the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

12.3 Reasons for Decision

12.3.1 Approval to utilise £4.5m of the Housing Revenue Account funding in order to commission circa 15,000 Stock Condition Surveys and associated stock appraisals by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. This will enable the Council to have a better understanding of its stock investment requirements and reflect future investment decisions within the 30-year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

12.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

12.4.1 The alternative option considered was to maintain delivering the Stock condition, energy performance and HHSRS surveys at the current rate of delivery (circa 6500 surveys per annum) and continue to undertake stock appraisal work within the existing resources available within the Housing Services Asset Management

team, however it would take significantly longer to get to the position which provides the Council a more accurate and up to date position on the investment need.

- 12.4.2 It is likely to take over 4 years without the proposals set out within this paper. This would pose a high risk of delays to assessing and completion of appraisals to the housing stock and subsequently risking the council's ability to deliver against the priorities as set out in the report above in a timely manner. Therefore, this option is not recommended as a way forward.

13. REQUEST TO ENTER INTO A FURTHER 3 YEAR CONTRACT TO COLLECT YORKSHIRE WATER RATES FROM SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL TENANTS AS AN AGENT OF YORKSHIRE WATER

- 13.1.1 Members considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services explaining that Sheffield City Council (SCC) provided services to Yorkshire Water (YW), acting as an "agent of Yorkshire Water" to collect water rates on behalf of Council tenants. This agreement had been in place for over 20 years, with the current 3 year agreement expiring on 31st March 2024.

- 13.1.2 The report set out the detail of the proposal to enter in to a new 3 year contract with Yorkshire Water. The report sought approval of the terms of contract offered by Yorkshire Water by the Housing Policy Committee for the period 1st July 2024 – 31st March 2027.

- 13.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Housing Policy Committee:-

1. Notes the contents of this report.
2. Authorises the entry into the contract offered by Yorkshire Water to allow Sheffield City Council (SCC) to enter into a new contract to collect water rates on behalf of Yorkshire Water (YW) from Council tenants.
3. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Director of Legal and Governance, to complete all necessary documentation.

13.3 Reasons for Decision

- 13.3.1 Sheffield City Council have been collecting water rates as an agent of Yorkshire Water for over 20 years. The contract is mutually beneficial for all parties. Sheffield City Council receive an income which is used to administer the Yorkshire Water Contract and support Council tenants to pay their water rates and support other housing services. Yorkshire Water receive a high collection rate, and trained staff who support tenants to access their support schemes. Tenants benefit from being able to make one payment for both their rent and water rates, as well as being able to access trained staff who are experts in providing financial inclusion and support, helping them to manage their money, pay their bills and ultimately sustain their tenancy.

13.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 13.4.1 The alternative is to not collect water rates for Yorkshire Water. This would however result in a reduction in service for tenants, who would have to make

payments direct to Yorkshire Water as well as their rent. Tenants would also not have the additional support to apply for water support grants. Yorkshire Water would require time to develop alternative arrangements to collect outstanding water rates. There would also be a reduction in income to the Council, which is currently being used to support housing services within the Council's overall budget.

14. CONTRACT PROCUREMENT - SUPPLY AND FIT OF WINDOWS AND DOORS - DOMESTIC ESTATE

14.1.1 Members considered a report of the Executive Director Neighbourhood Services seeking approval to commission a contract with an external provider for the supply and fit of external windows and doors to repair domestic properties on the Council's social housing estate.

14.1.2 Discussion took place around the specification for the windows and doors and members were assured that the 'Secure by Design' principles recommended by South Yorkshire Police had been included. Officers agreed to consider including a framework arrangement as an option within the procurement specification to enable multiple smaller providers to bid for the contract.

14.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Housing Policy Committee approves the commission of a contract for a period of up to 4 years with a provider for the supply and fit of windows and doors to repair domestic properties, with an estimated value of £5.154m as set out in this report.

14.3 Reasons for Decision

14.3.1 Preferred option – to procure the appropriate contract in the manner described in section 1 of this report. This will help enable the Council to continue to provide this key service. The procurement of the contract will ensure the Council is operating in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and achieving best value in its procurement of the services.

14.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

14.4.1 Do nothing – This is not an option as the Council has the ongoing requirement to install new windows and doors and public procurement regulations dictate that these services are procured in a compliant manner as described in this report.

14.4.2 Self-Deliver - This is not an option; HRM does not have the capacity to install all required doors and windows and does not have the ability to manufacture doors and windows.

14.4.3 Further extend existing contracts – this is not an option as all available contract extensions have been utilised. As ever, Council must adhere to the Public Contract Regulations (2015) (PCR) thus further variations (value and duration) are not deemed easily reconcilable with the provisions set out within PCR.

15. CONTRACT PROCUREMENT - DISREPAIRS AND DAMP/MOULD

15.1 Members considered a report of the Executive Director Neighbourhood Services

seeking approval to commission contracts with external providers for the following specialist services for Direct Services through 2024/25:

- Disrepairs
- Damp and Mould

15.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Housing Policy Committee:-

- 1) Approves the commission of a contract for a period of up to 2 years with a provider for the delivery of the disrepairs works, with an estimated value of £1,200,000 as set out in this report.
- 2) Approves the commission of a contract for a period of up to 2 years with a provider for the delivery of damp and mould remedial works, with an estimated value of £1,250,000 as set out in this report.
- 3) Notes the impact on the 2024/2025 business plan of the proposals set out in paragraph 4.2.4 of this report and that savings will be required in 2025/2026.

15.3 **Reasons for Decision**

15.3.1 Preferred option – to commission the contracts described in section 1 of this report. This will enable the Council to increase provision in both Disrepairs and Damp/Mould works to address the existing backlog of works. The procurement of the contracts will ensure the Council is operating in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and achieving best value in its procurement of the services.

15.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 15.4.1 Do Nothing - this is not an option as the Council has the ongoing requirement and legal responsibility to maintain its buildings and housing estate. Additional procurement of extra external resources is required to ensure the Council is fulfilling its obligations as Landlord.
- 15.4.2 Self-Deliver - this is not an option; the service does not have the capacity to deliver the services to the level required to reduce the existing backlog of works.
- 15.4.3 Pass more work to existing contractors – this is not an option as the Council's current contractors are operating at their capacity.