

Housing Policy Committee

Meeting held 15 December 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Douglas Johnson (Chair), Sue Auckland, Fran Belbin, Denise Fox, Sophie Thornton, Paul Wood, Kurtis Crossland (Substitute Member) and Minesh Parekh (Substitute Member)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ben Curran, Maleiki Haybe and Penny Baker.

2. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 Councillor Minesh Parekh declared an interest in regard to his work with Olivia Blake and the Stannington gas and water pipe issue, having been based out of the emergency hub at Lomas Hall for the previous two weeks.
- 3.2 Councillor Sue Auckland declared a personal declaration of interest of being the trustee of a minor in regard to a privately rented property.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th Nov 2022 were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

- 5.1 The Director of Housing provided a brief update on the situation that was ongoing in Stannington with regards to the mains water and gas pipes. It was highlighted that a multi-agency approach and coordinated effort had been applied in working towards resolving the issue.
- 5.2 Seb Odell attended the Committee and asked the following question on behalf of ACORN, which the Chair answered:

Q: We are aware that local authorities have the power to introduce selective licensing schemes for landlords that cover up to 20% of their area or 20% of the privately rented houses in their area without the need for central government approval. In February 2021, Paul Wood, then member for Housing in the Labour-run council, committed to an expansion of selective landlord licensing in the city. He told ACORN Sheffield that the council were considering several neighbourhoods as possible candidates for a new licensing scheme. The next step, as we understand it, was to investigate conditions in these areas to identify

where such a scheme would be suitable. What progress has been made on this commitment?

A: We must gather geographical evidence to support the need for a scheme as we have many other enforcement tools to address property issues – this resource required for a SL scheme is intensive so we must ensure we have the evidence, at geographical level, otherwise we are at risk of judicial review. Depending on the size of the proposed scheme could take 12 – 18 months as it would create a dedicated enforcement for housing enforcement officers as they are likely to find Category 1 hazards during inspections which means it is a big job.

We are working on areas where a SL scheme should be considered, we are currently analysing our recent private sector stock condition survey data in regard to the condition of PR properties across the city. It's important we analyse this first in order to be clear on why we would select a certain area for further SL investigation.

There is a letter included in the papers and the job is in hand.

5.3 Joe Rees Jones attended the Committee and asked the following question, which the Chair answered:

Q: Sheffield Labour Students asks the Housing Committee if they would set up a method of direct communication with students, such as a hotline or complaints inbox, so that the council can be fully aware of the scale of disrepair in student housing and thus build a case for landlord licensing in these predominantly student areas because even when we aren't affected by unaccountable landlords ourselves, we always know someone who is.

A: Selective licensing has just been explained. There is a telephone number on the council's website to report repair issues, there is also an email. There will be a response which will largely depend on the resourcing available. I would not suggest a separate route for students. One of the challenges is dealing with the worst cases and where the team can be most effective. It is helpful to have a precise description with photos of the issues.

Contact details for the reporting of such issues were promised to be emailed to Joe Rees Jones.

The Director of Housing explained about the recording of disrepair issues for students. It was explained that the information is collated.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

6.1 The Principal Democratic Services Officer presented the Work Programme and informed the Committee that although it contained suggestions for what it may contain, it was up to the Committee to decide. The Committee were asked to agree the set of recommendations in the report and give consideration to any necessary additions and amendments. Referrals in section 2.0 of the report were

also pointed out.

- 6.2 There were some discussions around future items, briefings and what should be included moving forwards. It was suggested that the Housing Strategy would be pushed back to June and the slot in March should be used for a further report on Damp and Mould.

6.3 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

1. That the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1;
2. That consideration be given to the further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Part 2 of Appendix 1; and
3. That Members give consideration to any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the next work programme report, for potential addition to the work programme.

7. GAS SERVICING POLICY

- 7.1 The Housing & Neighbourhood Services Head of Service, Head of Investment and Maintenance introduced the report which sought approval of a new policy on gas servicing. There has not been a policy relating to gas servicing before as there has been legal and statutory duties to carry out annual safety inspections. This policy provides a clear position statement of those duties and Sheffield City Council's commitment to achieve 100% compliance.

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

1. Approve the Gas Safety Policy for Sheffield City Council

7.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 7.3.1 It is recommended that the Housing Policy Committee approve this policy.

7.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 7.4.1 Sheffield City Council are not required to have a clear policy for gas servicing due to the legal and statutory obligations to carry out this activity, but we feel it is best practice to have one in place.

8. DAMP AND MOULD UPDATE

- 8.1 The Director of Housing, Housing & Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which outlined work undertaken to date in responding to DLHUC and the RSH and how SCC is responding to dealing effectively with damp and mould.

Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak who died two years ago from a respiratory condition caused by damp and mould in his home, both the Secretary of State for The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC) and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) have written to Sheffield City Council to seek re-assurances that it is fulfilling its legal and regulatory responsibilities in relation to

damp and mould, and if not, to outline how it intends to become full compliant.

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

1. Note the contents of this report and the work being done to address the issues of damp and mould in private rented homes and council housing.

8.3 Reasons for Decision

- 8.3.1 To inform the Housing Policy Committee of the work being undertaken by Officers to respond to the challenges of damp and mould in both private sector housing and council housing in Sheffield.

8.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 8.4.1 None

9. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2023-28

- 9.1 The Head of City Wide Housing Services introduced the report which sought approval of the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28. The Report outlined the statutory framework under which the Council has developed the strategy and the rationale for taking this course of action.

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

1. Approve the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28.

9.3 Reasons for Decision

- 9.3.1
- To address the increase in homelessness.
 - To have a strategic city-wide approach to homelessness prevention agreed by all of the key partners.

9.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 9.4.1 It is a statutory requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002 to produce a Homelessness Prevention Strategy every five years.⁵ The previous strategy came into effect on 03/01/2018 and a new strategy is therefore required. The option of not producing or delaying the development of a new strategy would be unlawful, we have therefore discounted this option.

10. CAPITAL FINANCE MONITORING REPORT

- 10.1 The Director of Housing, Housing & Neighbourhood Services introduced the report. The report brought the Committee up to date with the Housing Capital Programme financial position as at Month 7 2022/23.

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

1. Note the Housing Capital Programme financial position as at the end of

October 2022 (month 7), as set out on appendix A to this report.

10.3 **Reasons for Decision**

10.3.1 Not applicable: note only item.

10.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

10.4.1 Decline to approve the recommendation.

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