

Housing Policy Committee

Meeting held 2 February 2023

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

1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Sue Auckland.

3. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 No interests were declared at the meeting.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1 Minutes of previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 There were no public questions or petitions.

7. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 23/24

7.1 The Director of Housing & Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided an update of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan for 2023/24, including revised priorities and capital improvement plans for 2023/24, prior to approval by Strategy and Resources Policy Committee for submission to Full Council.

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

1. Notes that the HRA Business Plan report for 2023/24, the HRA Business Plan priorities for 2023/24 and HRA Revenue Budget 2023/24 as set out in the Financial Appendix, will go to the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee at

its meeting on 7th February, for recommendation to Full Council for approval;

2. Notes that once adopted by Full Council, monitoring delivery of HRA Business Plan priorities will be within the remit of Housing Policy Committee and a regular performance reporting schedule will be approved; and
3. Requests that the following matters be considered by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee when approving the HRA Business Plan priorities for 2023/24 and HRA Revenue Budget 2023/24:-
 - I. Maintaining the Stock Increase Programme (SIP);
 - II. Looking again at how to invest in order to decrease the repairs bill;
 - III. Looking at the possibility of further investment into retro-fitting; and
 - IV. Increasing tenant involvement, exploring the option of tenant-led local housing advisory panels and reporting arrangements with LACs.

7.3 Reasons for Decision

7.3.1 The report and its recommendations, set out the scale of the challenge ahead, the limited resources available and the difficult decisions that now need to be taken to deliver a balanced HRA budget for 2023/24. The delivery of a balanced HRA budget is dependent on setting a 7% rent increase for Council tenants as set out in this report. Members are asked to consider the proposed recommendations to:

- optimise the number of good quality affordable council homes in the city
- maximise the financial resources to deliver key outcomes for tenants and the city in the context of a self-financing funding regime Page 26
- ensure that tenants' homes continue to be well maintained and to optimise investment in estates; and
- assure the long-term sustainability of council housing in Sheffield.

7.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

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

8. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PITCH FEES

8.1 The Accommodation Manager introduced the report which set out the proposal for the 2023/24 increase in pitch fees relating to Sheffield City Council's Gypsy and Traveller sites at Longacre and Redmires. There is no nationally recommended pitch fee level for Gypsy and Traveller pitches as there is for social housing rents. It is left to the discretion of the landlord, subject to the terms of a Written Statement of Agreement between the Council and occupiers of the sites.

- 8.2 It was proposed to defer the decision to the March meeting.
- 8.3 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the **Housing** Policy Committee agreed to defer this decision to the March 2023 meeting.

9. PROCUREMENT OF HOTEL/B&B ACCOMMODATION

9.1 The Business Change Manager introduced the report which sought approval for officers to undertake a procurement exercise for up to 150 hotel and B & B bed spaces for a period of two years. These bed spaces will be used for interim and temporary accommodation for customers experiencing homelessness who are eligible as defined in the Housing Act and statutory instruments. This proposal does not seek to increase our overall usage of hotel and B & B bed spaces but concerns how SCC sources and pays for hotel and B & B bed spaces. A procurement exercise will allow SCC to better manage costs associated with hotel and B & B accommodation by having agreed nightly rates. Officer time will also be saved which will mean resources can be better utilised in the Housing Options and Advice service.

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

1. Authorise officers to conduct a procurement exercise to block book up to 150 hotel/B & B beds for a two year period, with an option to reduce the number of beds by up to 100 in Year 2; and
2. Appoint the preferred bidder, following that exercise.

9.3 Reasons for Decision

- 9.3.1 For the reasons outlined in Section 2 officers recommend the committee to endorse the recommendation to undertake a procurement exercise to block book up to 150 hotel/B & B bed spaces for the next two years.
- 9.3.2 Undertaking the procurement exercise will realise the following outcomes - Provide a ready source of hotel and B & B accommodation which will realise savings in officer time compared to the current spot booking approach. Officer resources can then be redirected to other work within the service. - Realise more stable and predictable costs for hotel and B & B accommodation compared to the current approach. This will mean budget forecasting and management of spend on temporary accommodation can be improved.

9.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 9.4.1 There are no other viable alternative options, to continue spot booking hotel and B&B accommodation would not represent value for money for SCC.

10. RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT ON DAMP AND MOULD IN SOCIAL HOUSING

- 10.1 Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak who died two years ago from a respiratory condition caused by damp and mould in his home, the Secretary of State for The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

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.

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided an update to the additional work undertaken to respond to DLUHC following the initial response provided on 30 November 2022. This report provides detail of the secondary ask from DLUHC which was provided on 27 January 2023. The response outlines our previous actions to deal with damp and mould in the Private Rented Sector and what we need to effectively tackle it in the future.

10.2 **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.

10.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 10.3.1 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.

10.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 10.4.1 None.

11. REVENUE FINANCE MONITORING REPORT - MONTH 8

- 11.1 The Head of Accounting brought the Committee up to date with the Council's financial position as at Month 8 2022/23 including General Fund revenue position and Housing Revenue Account.

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

1. Note the Council's financial position as at the end of November 2022 (month 8).

11.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 11.3.1 The paper was to bring the committee up to date with the Council's current financial position as at Month 8 2022/23.

11.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 11.4.1 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.

12. CAPITAL FINANCE MONITORING REPORT

- 12.1 The Housing Capital Programme brings together the 30-year Asset Management and Housing Growth Strategy for Council Housing. The

Programme sets out the priorities for investment to ensure that homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard and delivery of tenants' priorities, to improve the quality of homes and neighbourhoods. Investment priorities are formulated from detailed stock condition and other surveys to ensure effective planning of works, repairs intelligence, life-cycle modelling and, feedback from tenants.

The Housing Investment Programme is co-designed and agreed with tenants for Council Housing stock.

The Housing Capital Programme is split into three distinct areas of activity: Council Housing Investment (existing stock and assets) and the Council's Stock Increase Programme, funded from the Council's Housing Revenue Account, as described in the annual HRA Business Plan. There is also the Non-HRA Capital Programme which includes the Programme Management, Homes & Loans to private homes and investment in private homes. The table at 1.9 show the overall Housing Capital Programme split between Council Housing Investment, Stock Increase and Non HRA areas of the programme.

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided an update of the progress against the approved 2022/23 Housing Capital Programme. This is reported regularly as part of the Council's Corporate Capital Programme to Strategy and Resources Committee, normally on a quarterly basis. This report will focus on providing an update with regards to spend and progress against the 2022/23 Housing Capital Programme as at end of December 2022. The report also provides an update of the 5-year Housing Capital Programme.

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

1. Note the 2022-23 Housing Capital Programme forecasting and budget position at the end of period 9.

12.3 **Reasons for Decision**

12.3.1 The report provided the Housing Policy Committee members with an update on progress against the approved 5-year approved Capital programme.

12.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

12.4.1 No alternative options are considered as part of the update report.

13. **WORK PROGRAMME**

13.1 The Principal Democratic Services Officer introduced the report. Some suggestions and discussion took place regarding future items, including tenant participation and the net-zero roadmap. It was agreed to provide a knowledge briefing to the committee on the Sheffield Housing Company.

13.2 **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;

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.