

Housing Policy Committee

Meeting held 26 January 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Douglas Johnson (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Nabeela Mowlana (Group Spokesperson), Barbara Masters, Paul Turpin, Alan Woodcock and Mary Lea

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alison Norris, Councillor Paul Wood and Councillor Mazher Iqbal.

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 There were no formal declarations of interest made at this stage of the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on **14 December 2023** were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 A range of questions were received from Gabrielle Bruckner who did not attend the meeting. The Chair promised that a written response would be sent and circulated amongst the Committee.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

6.1 No Members questions were received in advance of the meeting. Cllr Penny Baker asked if it would be possible for a progress update on the block of houses that had lost their roofs at Lowedges. The Chair accepted this as a late question and the Director of Neighbourhood services provided a response.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 The Principal Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which contained the Committee's work programme for consideration and discussion. The aim of the work programme was to show 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.

7.2 Suggestions were made in regard to:

- a) Moving the Housing Subsidy Loss item to the work programme for March 2024.
- b) Adding the Improvement Plan for full Gas Regulation Compliance to the work programme for March 2024.
- c) Climate Statement action plan timelines.
- d) Resolutions made from Full Council and how they have been dealt with. It was agreed the Chair would liaise with the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services to see how this could be taken forwards.

The Chair reiterated that the Climate Statements referral would be dealt with as an item on the agenda.

7.3 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That:-

1. The Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1;
2. Consideration be given to the further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Part 2 of Appendix 1; and
3. 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.

8. **TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

8.1 The Director of Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which stated that the current Housing and Neighbourhoods Engagement Strategy was launched in 2021 and was written in close consultation with tenants and leaseholders, and a commitment was made to review it after 3 years. It was explained that the review had happened, again in consultation with tenants and leaseholders, and the Strategy had been updated based on their feedback. The Action Plan which underpins the Strategy and describes the intention of how implement it was also updated as part of the review. Since the introduction of the new Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, the importance of listening to, and acting on, tenant views has become ever more important. It was explained that the updated Tenant and Leaseholder Strategy would help meet those new regulatory requirements.

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

1. Note the outcomes of the consultation undertaken as part of the

Engagement Strategy Review, as described in this report.

2. Approves a) the updated Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy, and b) the updated Engagement Strategy Action Plan.

8.3 **Reasons for Decision**

8.3.1 Adopting the updated Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy will enable the Council to further improve how it engages with its tenants and leaseholders.

8.3.2 It will also support the Council in meeting the requirements of the new social housing regulatory framework.

8.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

8.4.1 The alternative to updating the strategy as proposed in this paper would be to continue with the current Engagement Strategy that has been in place since 2020. However, this would be contrary to our commitment to reviewing and updating the Strategy after 3 years.

9. **SELECTIVE LICENSING SCHEME CLOSURE REPORT**

9.1 The Team Manager of Private Housing Standards introduced the report which outlined findings from the recently concluded Selective Licensing designation which was in operation on parts of London Road, Abbeydale Road and Chesterfield Road as well as certain adjoining streets. It will give background information as to why the scheme was implemented and a summary of the actions taken by Private Housing Standards in ensuring all licensable properties within the scheme met the licence conditions. It includes information relating to the inspection programme, the enforcement actions taken and a general overview of results and findings.

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

1. Note the content of the report.

9.3 **Reasons for Decision**

9.3.1 No recommendation sought; the report gives an overview of the now completed selective licence designation.

9.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

9.4.1 N/A

10. **CLIMATE STATEMENT**

10.1 The Housing Decarbonisation Manager introduced the report which aimed to present the Council's Housing Policy Committee Climate Statement for consideration by the Housing Policy to ensure that the proposed actions are reflected in the work programme of the committee. The Housing Policy Committee climate statement seeks to:

1. Respond to the Annual Climate Progress Report 2022/23 in a timely manner.
2. Restate the cross-party council commitment to taking what action we can to address the climate emergency, adapt our city and council for a

changing climate and reduce emissions to achieve our ambition to be a net zero city and council by 2030.

3. Increase understanding of the impact climate change will have on committees, the opportunities that tackling climate change offers, and the contribution to climate and net zero action each committee is currently making and needs to make moving forward.

10.2 Following some discussion the Committee agreed to a different set of recommendations to reflect the ongoing work and intended future work.

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

1. Consider the Statement of Climate Commitments relevant to the Housing Policy Committee and note the contents of the report.
2. Note that the Statement of Climate Commitments should form a part of all decisions coming to the committee as part of its duty to consider the climate impact of individual decisions.
3. Request that a report is brought back to the June meeting on the progress of the delivery of the Statement of Climate Commitment's and a presentation of what additional items are required to meet the Statement of Climate Commitments.

10.4 **Reasons for Decision**

10.4.1 It is important that the response to the Annual Climate Progress Report is open and transparent in setting out the challenges which the local authority faces in making progress and clarifies future expectations on the part we all have to play in addressing climate change.

10.4.2 Committee do not currently have specific strategic goals for climate. The process required to develop these, and have the statements approved to be read at each committee meeting meant that option 5.2 was not feasible with the available resource and timeframe.

10.5 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

10.5.1 Not providing committee climate statements considered due to the resource required to collate.

10.5.2 Providing more detailed Committee Climate Statements that provided an overview of strategic climate goals, with each Chair then reading the committees statement publicly at their respective committee meeting following release of the report.

11. ROAD MAP TO NET ZERO

11.1 The Housing Decarbonisation Manager introduced the report which briefed members on the commission to RLB (Rider Levett Bucknall) to develop a roadmap to carbon net zero for the Council's housing stock.

The project directly supports Sheffield's strategies and ambitions centred on net zero carbon, tackling fuel poverty and providing affordable warmth.

11.2 After some discussion the Committee agreed to include an additional 2 limbs to the original set of recommendations outlined in the report (shown as 4 and 5 in 11.3).

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

1. Note the aspiration to integrate heat pump delivery into future housing stock activity, and the outline plans described in this report.
2. Note the funding shortfall and propose any alternative options for officer examination to meet that shortfall.
3. Note the ongoing retrofit delivery and build-capacity activity.
4. Look forward to the final report from the external experts.
5. Re-state the committee's endorsement of a fabric-first approach focussing on good quality insulation and ventilation.

11.4 **Reasons for Decision**

11.4.1 In order to tackle climate change and as part of meeting the Council's 2030 net zero ambitions it must take action to decarbonise its housing stock. Fundamentally, this involves the transition to low carbon heating solutions. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure the fabric of the buildings provides the appropriate level of thermal retention in relation to new heating technologies to ensure household energy costs are not increased.

11.5 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

11.5.1 The only alternative is to do nothing. This would involve not delivering focussed investment in the retrofit of homes, including improved energy efficiency measures and switch to low carbon heating. This would not meet the Council's own aims and ambitions to tackle climate change, and it is not sustainable in the long term as national policy transitions away from fossil fuels. To not act sooner creates a greater challenge and cost.

12. UPDATE ON HOUSING SUBSIDY LOSS

12.1 The Director of Neighbourhood Services and The Manager of Revenues and Benefits Policy and Support Team introduced the report which set out the financial position of Housing Benefit Subsidy on Temporary and Supported Exempt Accommodation.

12.2 The committee agreed to an additional limb of the recommendations outlined in the report (shown as 2 of 12.2).

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

1. Note the information described in the paper and the impact on the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Outturn.
2. Look forward to the further report in March 2024.

12.3 **Reasons for Decision**

12.3.1 To provide Members with information relating to the City Council's revenue budget position for 2023/24.

12.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

12.4.1 No other alternatives were considered.

13. RESPONSE TO PETITION ON VERDON STREET FLATS

13.1 The Director of Neighbourhood Services. referred to the report which was to provide the Committee with a position statement on action taken in response to a petition submitted on 27 October 2023 regarding pest infestation and reports of damp and mould from residents on Verdon Street. The petition was open until 12 December 2023 and was signed by 6 residents.

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

1. Note the progress on addressing concerns raised by residents at Verdon Street.

13.3 **Reasons for Decision**

13.3.1 Members are asked to note the remedial work taking place to address the concerns raised by residents on Verdon Street from the petition considered at Housing Policy Committee in December 2023 and, the ongoing work to respond to these and any further issues at Verdon Street.

13.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

13.4.1 No alternative options have been considered. We have a statutory duty to ensure the health and safety of our residents.

14. RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON SAFE AND LEGAL ROUTES CAP

14.1 The Director of Neighbourhood Services referred to the report which was to provide the Committee with a copy of the return made to the Home Office as part of the Safe and Legal Routes Cap Consultation.

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

1. Note the contents of the return and the authority's commitment to resettle 88 refugees in 2025.

14.3 **Reasons for Decision**

14.3.1 The Council now has over 15 years' experience of management and delivery of similar refugee resettlement programmes, the longest recent involvement of any local authority in the UK.

Committee is asked to note the consultation response made to the Home Office.

14.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

14.4.1 Due to the need to urgently respond to the consultation it was agreed to work with the existing city infrastructure and organisations that currently support the Council and our most vulnerable refugees. The response commits to resettle 88

refugees in 2025. The availability of accommodation and services will continue to be monitored.

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