

- Present:** Councillors Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*), Liz Bushell, Christopher Reid, Edmund Strengiel, Pat Vaughan and Loraine Woolley
- Apologies for Absence:** Steven Bearder (Member of LTP) and Sheila Watkinson (Member of LTP)
- Also in Attendance:** Mick Barber (Chair of LTP) and Debbie Rousseau (Member of LTP)

**69. Confirmation of Minutes - 27 January 2020**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2020 be confirmed.

**70. Matters Arising**

Notice Boards

The Chair referred to minute number 64 and asked if there had been any progress with the pilot notice boards in the Cannon Street area?

Mick Barber Chair of LTP advised that it had been currently put on hold due to COVID 19. It would be continued in the future.

**71. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Strengiel declared a Personal Interest in the item entitled "Housing Department Update- COVID 19" as he was Director of YMCA Lincolnshire – incorporating the Nomad Trust.

Councillor Strengiel declared a Personal Interest in the item entitled "Housing Finance" as he was Chair of the Lincolnshire Pension Forum and a Lincolnshire County Councillor.

**72. LTP Matters**

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel advised that working groups had been held via zoom, however, the Lincoln Tenants Panel had not met since lockdown. A zoom meeting would be held soon and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

**73. Housing Department Update - Covid 19**

Daren Turner, Strategic Director Housing and Investment provided an update report to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee on the response from his Department to the COVID 19 epidemic and the future implications of that response.

The Housing Management Team gave a detailed presentation to the committee:

Daren Turner, Strategic Director of Housing and Investment gave an overview of the response by the Housing Department and provided details of:

- Initial Response
  - Protect Staff
  - Protect the Vulnerable
- Achievements
- Challenges Encountered
- Recovery Stage
- Impact

Andrew McNeil, Assistant Director of Housing Strategy gave an overview of the response and implications of COVID19 on his area of responsibility and provided details of:

- Initial Response
- Achievements
- Challenges Encountered
- Recovery Stage
- Impact
- Key Statistics

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director of Housing gave an overview of the response and implications of COVID19 on her area of responsibility and provided details of:

- Initial Response
- Achievements
- Challenges Encountered
- Recovery Stage
- The New Business as Usual
- Key Statistics

Matt Hillman, Assistant Director of Investment and Maintenance gave an overview of the response and implications of COVID 19 on his area of responsibility and provided details of:

- Initial Response
- Achievements
- Challenges Encountered
- Recovery Stage
- Impact
- Key Statistics

Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to all members of staff for their work during this time.

Members of the Committee asked the following questions and received responses from the relevant Officer:

**Question:** How many people were homeless across the County?

**Response:** Clarified that the City Council had not dealt with all homelessness across the County, but had assisted the other districts to create a network with other bodies to help them to address this issue. The numbers of homeless had dropped considerably across the County.

**Question:** When would the changes to the Allocations Policy be implemented?

**Response:** Clarified that the Allocations Policy was due to be implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020, however, the timescale could not be met as the IT systems needed updating. The IT work was currently being undertaken and the policy would be implemented in September 2020.

**Question:** Where had the cost reductions come from?

**Response:** Clarified that there were some vacancies that would not be filled, there was a reduction in fleet costs, training had been put on hold and some staff had been furloughed.

**Question:** Was online resident engagement something that had been tried in the past or was it a new idea?

**Response:** Work that had been talked about previously had been accelerated. LTP meetings would be held via zoom and we were looking at undertaking online consultations. There were some issues around LTP members access to IT which needed addressing.

**Question:** What types of calls were received by the Community Helpline?

**Response:** A variety of different calls were received by the helpline. The helpline mainly helped with distributing food parcels.

**Question:** How well were the self-isolation units for rough sleepers used?

**Response:** There were 2 fully furnished isolation units that were used by a steady stream of people, generally those who had been released from prison or who had come out of hospital. We were not made aware of anyone that stayed in there testing positive for COVID19.

**Question:** How many people were still in accommodation following the Everyone In campaign?

**Response:** 10 people were still in accommodation, 5 had been evicted, several were moved to alternative accommodation and some people had left of their own accord.

**Question:** How was the service provided to rough sleepers paid for?

**Response:** Homelessness was a provision in the General Fund.

**Question:** Who bears the cost of taking people off the streets?

**Response:** Lincolnshire County Council had received government funding to cover 4 areas, one of which was homelessness. To date none of the Districts had received any of this funding for homelessness. The City Council did receive a small amount of funding for the Everyone In campaign.

**Question:** Were the District Councils expected to bid for the funding from the County Council?

**Response:** There was not a prescribed methodology to do this.

**Question:** How were the Rough Sleepers Team funded?

**Response:** We had received government grants, through the RSI programme for some of the homelessness costs.

**Question:** Would leaving vacancies open be detrimental to the services provided?

**Response:** The vacancies had been held over for some time and were unable to appoint due to the crisis. We would look at each position and would recruit if needed.

**Question:** Was the Council being successful at sustaining tenancies?

**Response:** The idea previously was to use reserves to pilot a Tenancy Sustainment Team who would specialise in providing advice on benefits etc to assist people with sustaining their tenancy. However, we have learnt through the epidemic that some of our staff already had these skills and we were looking to utilise them.

**Question:** The internal repairs would be started on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020, would these be done by priority or district?

**Response:** The external repairs had already been started, the internal repairs would be done by area.

**Question:** What would be the timescale for the completion of the internal repairs?

**Response:** Staff would be back from furlough and would clear the back log. There were 4 areas, 2 north and 2 south of the city, it would take approximately 1 and half weeks per area to complete.

RESOLVED that the response to the COVID 19 crisis and the ongoing situation of Housing Services be noted.

#### **74. Housing Finance**

Colleen Warren, Financial Services Manager

- a. presented the Council's Housing out-turn position for 2019/20
- b. advised that the report provided members with the provisional summary of actual income and expenditure compared to revised budget for HRA and HRS services and showed how any surpluses had been allocated to reserves.
- c. stated that the full out-turn report for the Authority had been presented to Performance Scrutiny on 9 July 2020.
- d. advised that for 2019/20 the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) net revenue budget was set at £52,040, which resulted in an estimated level of general balances at year-end of £1078,609.
- e. explained that the financial performance quarterly monitoring report for 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter predicted an underspend of £79,582. The provisional outturn for 2019/20 now indicated an overspend of £71,514. This would result in HRA balances at 31 March 2020 of £1,007,095.
- f. advised that for 2019/20 the Council's Housing Repairs Service (HRS) net revenue budget was set at zero, reflecting its full cost recovery nature.
- g. explained that the financial performance quarterly monitoring report for 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter predicted a £117,075 surplus outturn for 2019/20. The provisional outturn for 2019/20 showed a trading surplus of £72,487 had been repatriated to the HRA, which was the major service user.

h. invited members questions and comments.

The Chair asked for the split between what was spent on the Housing Repairs service and the management?

Collen Warren, Financial Services Manager referred to the HRA Provisional Outturn 2019/20 table detailed at paragraph 3.3 of the report and highlighted the Repairs & Maintenance and Supervision & Management figures.

RESOLVED that the provisional out-turn position for HRA and HRS for 2019/20 be noted.

**75. Any other Business**

Daren Turner, Strategic Director of Housing and Investment suggested that a report on Performance Indicators be brought to the next meeting.

RESOLVED that a report on Performance Indicators be brought to the next meeting of Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee.