

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

76. Confirmation of Minutes - 20 July 2020

Councillor Strengiel referred to minute number 71. and advised that his Declaration of Interest needed to be amended to read “Chair of Lincolnshire Pension Fund”

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2020 be confirmed subject to the above amendment.

77. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

78. Allocations Policy Update (Verbal Report)

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director- Housing Management gave a verbal update on the Allocations Policy and advised on the following main points:

- The new Allocations Policy had not been implemented as work was being completed by Abitas to update the IT systems.
- A realistic timetable for implementing the new Policy would be December 2020.
- The bid cycles would be re-starting and would be fortnightly rather than weekly at present.
- There was a reduced number of properties becoming available.
- Two trial cycles had taken place and all properties were allocated except for some independent living accommodation.
- Everyone on the waiting list that was over 60 was contacted to find out if they were interested in the independent living accommodation. Most did not want to move due to shielding or their age.

The committee discussed the update and asked the following questions:

Question: Were bed and breakfasts still being used for homelessness?

Response: At the moment bed and breakfast usage was quite small.

Question: What measures were put in place to sustain tenancies?

Response: A questionnaire was completed with a new tenant which identified anyone who needed support very early on in their tenancies. The voids team were now located in Tenancy Services, so that they could work more closely together and share information at the start of a tenancy.

Question: Asked for clarification on how the support to re-home would be continued in future when the P3 contract ended?

Response: Action Lincs properties would continue to be run for the next 6 months, at the end of the 6 months it would be decided whether to offer them a tenancy in these properties.

Questions: When the 6 months ended would they continue to be supported?

Response: They would become an Introductory Tenant at the council.

Framework had the contract from October 2020, so if the person qualified for housing support then they would receive help.

Question: What sort of properties were people looking for?

Response: There was demand across the board for all properties except for sheltered accommodation. Statistically most people wanted 1 bedroom flats, and most of the void properties were 1 bedroom flats, however, the most needed properties were 2 and 3 bedroom houses.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

79. Analysis of Housing Register (Verbal Report)

This item was discussed under minute number 78.

80. Performance Indicators (Verbal Report)

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director – Housing Management

- a. presented a report to
 - i. advise Members of the current performance against indicators normally reported to scrutiny
 - ii. consider how performance information could be monitored and reported.
- b. advised that performance information was reported to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee on a quarterly basis. Targets were reviewed on an annual basis with both tenants and the committee at the March meeting.
- c. advised that due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the committee due to take place in March was cancelled and therefore targets were not agreed to measure performance 2020/21
- d. advised that throughout the lockdown period, normal management information had been collated but performance against targets had not been formally reported to date.
- e. highlighted appendix A which provided details of the performance measures that were normally reported against the targets that would have been proposed at the March meeting.
- f. referred to appendix A of the report and advised that the some indicators could not be reported on as normal repairs had not been carried out.
- g. explained that there had been delays in repairing and allocating empty properties due to the pandemic and Government instructions on non-essential moves and holding empty properties for homeless households. Therefore performance in voids was significantly below the target that

would normally be reviewed against but should be viewed against external restrictions on performance.

- h. presented an assessment of current performance against key performance indicators carried out by Housemark and advised that this document would be circulated to members following the meeting.
- i. advised that the main focus from Housemark was:
 - Void rent lost
 - Arrears
 - ASB
- j. explained that rent arrears had increased but compared to other authorities nationally the council were doing well
- k. invited committees questions and comments

Question: Had the targets been agreed with LTP?

Response: Yes, they would also have been presented at the last meeting of Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee, however, it was cancelled due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Question: Referred to Performance Indicator 48 relating to percentage of homes with a valid gas safety certificate and asked if it was an area of concern?

Response: Usually the target would be reached by the end of the year. Further clarified that gas safety checks were continuing through the pandemic, but officers were reliant on tenants allowing them into the properties.

Question: Referred to unoccupied arrears and asked what this covered?

Response: This included rent loss from voids properties and properties not tenanted.

Question: How was homelessness and rough sleepers funded?

Response: Homelessness and rough sleepers were funded by the General Fund as well the Everyone In Campaign. The Council had also received grants for homelessness. To clarify the statutory duty to house someone would come from the General fund. If that person then chose to be a tenant it would come under the Housing Revenue Account like any normal tenancy.

Question: Referred to the average re-let period performance indicator and asked why they were taking longer to process?

Response: The current voids processing times needed to be improved. There had been delays due to external contractors that had furloughed their staff, the supply chain had slowed down and it was difficult to source materials and also due to social distancing as only 2 operatives were allowed to work in a property on the same day.

Question: Referred to write-offs and asked if they could become a tenant again?

Response: At present there was a moratorium for evicting tenants with arrears as the courts were not operating. Under normal circumstances if a tenant built up large arrears and they were not making an attempt to pay then the Council could apply for possession of the property. If someone terminated their tenancy with arrears the Council would seek to recover that amount so it would not be written off instantly. A debt had to be legally written off if the person was declared bankrupt. If a person acknowledged the debt it could not legally be written off for 7 years and they would not be allowed back on the waiting list. If the 7 year period had passed they could apply to be statutory homeless and the Council would legally have to house them.

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director Housing Management shared the Housing Performance Model that was used operationally and asked if the committee would like the information incorporated into future performance updates.

The committee confirmed the at the information would be useful.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

81. Sheltered Accommodation (Verbal Report)

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director – Housing Management gave a verbal update on the effects of the Corona virus pandemic on the communal facilities within the Councils Sheltered Accommodation. She advised that all communal facilities with the exception of Broomhill would be open from 21st September 2020. Broomhill required some additional work and the areas would be opened once the work was completed. A deep clean had taken place in all communal facilities and additional signage and hand sanitizer had been fitted. Tenants had also been spoken to about the importance of social distancing.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

82. LTP Matters

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel presented a report on the activities of the Lincoln Tenants Panel

- a. advised that the lockdown had proved a challenge for Lincoln Tenants Panel which had meant that many scheduled activities could not take place, it was difficult for LTP to carry out its function of co-regulation during this time.
- b. advised that informal meetings had been held via zoom which had allowed the LTP to make progress in several areas of work, including a constitution of the panel's review into gardens and responding to a consultation on a new type of boiler that would be fitted.
- c. advised that LTP members had been supporting residents on their estates to support the most vulnerable throughout lockdown.
- d. advised that LTP had also been working on a restructure of LTP and would be holding a meeting on 8 September to discuss these changes, an update would be provided at the next Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee meeting.
- e. expressed his thanks to the hard work of the council staff in supporting tenants throughout the pandemic.

RESOVED that the report be noted.