

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Helena Mair, Councillor Thomas Dyer,
Councillor Christopher Reid, Councillor
Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor Laura McWilliams,
Councillor Lucinda Preston, Councillor Pat Vaughan and
Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: None.

37. Confirmation of Minutes - 19 November 2020

RESOLVED that:

1. Clarification of whether there was a standard for trees be reported back to the committee by officers.
2. Clarification of the amount of customers having visited the virtual Christmas Market 2020 be forwarded to the committee.
3. The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2021 be confirmed.

38. Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee Minutes - 2 November 2020

The minutes from the Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee meeting that took place on 2 November 2020 were noted.

39. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

40. Portfolio Holder under Scrutiny - Quality Housing

Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee covering the following main points:
 - Homelessness – this continued to be a significant issue in Lincoln. The number of people who presented themselves as homeless varied in the first two quarters of the current year from a low of 21 in April to a peak of 52 in July. The Government homeless and rough sleeping initiatives during the pandemic had been responded to well and this continued to be the case.
 - Tenancy Services – the staff in Tenancy Services had worked extremely hard to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on rent areas and collection. The two-week rent-free period was brought forward from Christmas to the start of the financial year. A discretionary rental was set up hardship fund which had assisted 179 tenants.

- Housing Repairs – one effect of COVID-19 appeared to have been a reduction in the number of repairs reported. Priority repairs were being carried out within 24 hours and urgent repairs within 3 days.
- Voids – At the end of quarter 2 there were 65 void properties. The process of bringing these back into use had been substantially affected by COVID-19. This had resulted in the turnaround time being 50 days which was up from 32 days.
- New Build/Allocations – The pandemic had slowed down work on new properties but the five new properties on the site of the former Markham House building on Swift Gardens were completed and had been let to tenants. Although work on De Wint Court extra care unit had been affected, this was still hoped to be finished in the current calendar year.
- Health – The COVID-19 pandemic had completely dominated health over the last year. In terms of general health, the data from Public Health England showed that life expectancy at birth for both men and women continued to deteriorate and continued to be worse than for the rest of England. Economic deprivation was a significant factor in health and housing was another major factor.

b) invited members' questions and comments.

Question: Members asked if there were any figures available for New Schedule Repair System and how this linked to the Climate Change Agenda and any updates for the Green Agenda?

Response: The Scheduled Repairs System was at its trial stage and there were no figures available yet. The contract for the vehicle fleet was being retendered so we may be able to obtain hybrid vehicles. Better quality materials that lasted longer were being put in properties so not as many yearly repairs would need to be carried out. Fleet costs should decrease if hybrid vehicles were added to the fleet.

Question: Members asked for figures of people that were in B&B's, if there were any families and what the cooking facilities were like so that children had access to hot meals?

Response: B&B's had no cooking facilities and hotels were not serving food which was a problem across the country. There were 4/5 people in B&B's and 15 in temporary accommodation which had access to cooking facilities. Vouchers and support to provide meals for people that didn't have cooking facilities was provided.

Question: Members asked how many staff had been furloughed and how many had been re-deployed.

Response: In the first phase there were 47 staff furloughed and 40 in the second phase. Some staff were allocated to the befriending service, delivering food within the City, Business Grants Payments and staff were also trained to help cover the Lincare phone system.

Question: Members asked what the intention was for the two-week rent-free period for tenants as it occurred at Easter time last year?

Response: The hardship fund was available to help tenants meet payments and so far it had helped over 100 tenants.

Question: Members asked whether there was an update on the Housing Related Support Grants from Lincolnshire County Council and what process was in place for evictions?

Response: The existing Housing Related Support contract was extended until October, this helped people with complex needs. The new contract started at the beginning of October. Evictions had been suspended and there would be a long wait to get a court date due to backlogs. Judges had prioritised domestic violence cases over evictions.

Question: People could present themselves as being homeless up to 56 days before they were evicted. Members asked whether they could be evicted before this date.

Response: Tenants could only be evicted if a court order was obtained.

Question: Members asked how much it cost to get 'buy back' properties back up to a lettable standard and what the plan was for the future of buybacks.

Response: It cost approximately anywhere between zero and £10k to get buybacks up to a lettable standard, depending on the condition of the property. Future buyback properties were being looked at to sit alongside the new build properties.

Question: Members asked whether we monitored the environmental efficiency of our Council Houses and how tenants got electric points for cars installed.

Response: We held detailed accounts of the equipment that was installed in each property such as boilers etc, which helped us to look at future needs/upgrades. We also have a SAT rating for each of the properties in our stock. All new properties had electric charging points installed in them.

Question: Members asked whether vehicle telematics would be installed on the new fleet vehicles?

Response: Telematics software was already available within the fleet and the new fleet would have it also. At the minute data could not be accessed unless a complaint was raised and a year-end summary report could be run out of the software. The year-end data was an all-round figure which related to driver style as well as vehicle usage and not specific for each employee.

Question: Members asked whether the reduction in repairs being reported was due to people not wanting workmen in their homes.

Response: The reduction in repairs being reported was down to older tenants not wanting anyone in their homes together with a lot of people who were isolating.

Question: Members asked what hadn't been resolved by the new voids provider.

Response: The contractor for voids was not equipped to deal with the amount of work we had with a lack in the amount of resources they had to work on these. This situation had improved dramatically since.

Question: Members asked whether something needed to be done to improve the life expectancy of residents in Lincoln as it was not good.

Response: Cllr Nannestad sat on a Physical Lifestyle Board which worked with businesses to promote more physical lifestyles. Children's play areas helped promote this initiative and work was ongoing to improve housing.

41. Performance Report - Housing Repairs Service

Daryl Wright, Maintenance Manager:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee on the financial position of the Housing Repairs Service at the end of 2019/20 financial year.
- b) highlighted that the quarterly monitoring report for the 3rd quarter predicted a £117,075 surplus outturn for 2019/20. The provisional outturn for 2019/20 showed a trading surplus of £72,487.
- c) explained that the key performance areas that were monitored throughout the year were as follows:
 - The level of tenant satisfaction with repairs that had been carried out.
 - The percentage of all reactive repairs completed within timescale
 - The percentage of emergency repairs completed within timescale
 - The percentage of appointments that were kept
 - The percentage of repairs completed first time
 - The average end-to-end time for all reactive repairs
- d) provided an update on the current situation:
 - Performance in most areas had been maintained this financial year with slight improvements in certain areas, but COVID-19 had seen challenges which had required reactive changes within the department
 - COVID-19 had affected performance in many areas. With limitations on tradespeople working, maintaining social distancing restrictions, home working, conflicting priorities and government changes in guidance issued, the HRS had adapted to meet these challenges and maintain performance.
 - Increased supplier costs, usage and demand for PPE and installing control measures within Hamilton House would also impact financially on the service.
 - The Housing Repairs Service (HRS) had integrated new Assistant Maintenance Team Leaders within the department. They were offering support to Team Leaders, allowing them to review processes and procedures and make small but positive changes to the department.
 - The HRS had started a scheduled repair pilot to carry out Day to Day repairs which was showing many benefits while maintaining

service delivery. This would be reviewed at the end of January 2021. Early indications were that the changes to procedures were having a wide range of positives in terms of both financial and service delivery.

- The HRS had continued to carry out a large amount of work around ensuring the service was compliant with current and upcoming regulations, including the appointment of a Team Leader to specifically manage compliance streams of work such as BM-Trada (fire door accreditation). This would ensure that HRS were able to continue re-assurance to the authority and customers that items, such as fire safety, were managed proactively while allowing work that usually required external contractors to be carried out.
- Over the last year, HRS had started to carry out several procurement exercises to conclude in 2021. Two of these related to the departments' biggest HRS hold, fleet and material suppliers. A new material supplier would come into effect as of the 4th April and the introduction of a new fleet would aim to be greener and more efficient which helped towards the Council's climate goals.

e) invited members' comments and questions.

Comment: Performance Scrutiny Committee wanted to give their thanks to the Housing Teams for all their work since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Question: Members asked why there were more repairs completed in April compared to other months and why the number of repairs completed first time had slipped?

Response: Emergency repairs were generally weather related due to the time of year and weather dependant. There were some issues regarding supply chains such as window production, which led to first time repairs slipping.

RESOLVED that the progress made on performance and efficiency by the Housing Repairs Service be noted.

42. Fire Safety Update

Ross O'Loughlin, Fire Safety Assurance Manager:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee on the Councils actions and progress on fire safety in light of the Hackitt review following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower.
- b) explained that the collaboration between Investment and Housing Repairs Teams had created opportunity to enhance fire safety provisions across the housing stock particularly regarding fire doors. The invitation of SAT into these collaborative meetings had seen some projects and issues expedited through development of understanding the holistic risk-based approach, combined with project management and joinery expertise. This would continue and despite teething problems in the procurement of fire doors in the tower blocks, fire safety knowledge had gathered momentum and was being realised in the commitment to qualifying staff to BM Trada (UK third party accreditation service for wood work).

- c) highlighted that the Fire Service Inspection of the Tower Blocks was facilitated by SAT. Through negotiation and careful consideration of the risks presented to the Fire Service, the current progress and plans in place had satisfied the inspectors that risk was appropriately managed.
- d) stated that the main effort was aimed at the tower blocks as this had a greater fire risk, in terms of number of occupants in one location. However, the overall assessment was not of a high likelihood. All the actions in the last round of Fire Risk Assessments had been completed. Now the fire strategies had been completed, new Fire Risk Assessments could be commissioned with a better picture being built, with more knowledge to make the right decisions around investment in fire safety.
- e) explained that sheltered schemes were the next priority in terms of building risk, due to the number of occupants and the type of occupant. The fire door programmes would be delivered with a risk-based approach, to manage the investment output. The same approach to fire strategies would continue as with tower blocks.
- f) highlighted that RO/ROSS checks carried out so far had provided strong evidence that the legal checks were being carried out in accordance with the appropriate standards and regularity.
- g) invited members' comments and questions.

Question: Members asked for an explanation of paragraph 6.3 of the report?

Response: Officers were looking at how the Council could best engage with residents and make sure that their views were heard. This process would start from the beginning with Councillors and move forward from there.

Comment: Members commented that the training session that took place last week was useful and that it would be a good idea to do an additional member workshop later.

Question: Members asked how the fire safety data would be presented in relation to performance.

Response: At the current time this was not known.

Question: Members asked whether fire drills took place at high rise flats.

Response: This had been discussed with the fire service and would not be taking place. Some high-rise flats had been partially evacuated before, but the fire service tried to steer away from doing fire drills. There had been fire drills at Trent View but a 'stay put policy' was in place for the building due to it being made from concrete and free from cladding. The fire service had strict control on how to evacuate high rise flats so it would be managed effectively and precisely by the fire service as experts if the time arose.

Comment: Members asked for performance targets to be incorporated into the next report.

RESOLVED that:

1. Performance Targets be incorporated into future updates on fire safety.
2. The progress made in addressing the issues outlined within the report and proposals from the Hackitt review be noted.

43. Work Programme Update 2020/21

Clare Stait, Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented the draft work programme for 2020/21 as detailed at Appendix A of her report
- b) advised that the work programme for the Performance Scrutiny Committee was put forward annually for approval by Council; the work programme was then regularly updated throughout the year in consultation with the Performance Scrutiny Committee and its Chair
- c) reported that items had been scheduled in accordance with the existing work programme and officers' guidance regarding the meetings at which the most up-to-date information could be reported to the committee; the work programme also included the list of portfolio holders under scrutiny
- d) requested any relevant comments or changes to the proposed work programme for 2020/21.

RESOLVED that the work programme 2020/21 be noted.