

Present: Councillors Councillor Pat Vaughan (*in the Chair*), Liz Bushell, Jane Loffhagen, Christopher Reid, Edmund Strengiel and Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: None.

Also in Attendance: Mick Barber (Chair of LTP), Caroline Coyle-Fox (Vice Chair of LTP), Mike Asher, Steven Bearder (Member of LTP) and Debbie Rousseau (Member of LTP)

32. Confirmation of Minutes - 1 November 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2021 be confirmed.

33. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

34. LTP Review Update Report

Members of Lincoln Tenants Panel gave an update on the following areas:

- Contributed to work on fire safety engagement
- Agreed objectives and assisted in the development of the Tenant Involvement Strategy and revised Lincoln Tenant Panel constitution
- Involved with complaints monitoring and had worked with the regulator regarding the complaints procedure
- Completed a review on gardens
- Contributed to the schedule repairs pilot system
- Completed consultation on off street parking
- Had been involved with the recruitment of a new Resident Involvement Manager
- Pleased with the Annual Report to Tenants.

The Sub-Committee discussed in detail the issue of scooters being stored in communal areas and asked how the issue was being addressed.

The Director of Housing responded that an issue had been recognised and a dedicated social media campaign had taken place alongside a letter to every tenant who had a communal area. This exercise could be repeated to remind tenants not to block communal areas as they could cause a fire safety issue.

Members of LTP highlighted the issue of train wiring for scooters in the communal area and also the issue of storing scooters as tenants feared theft or vandalism if they were left on the street. It was stated that storage pods at Broomhill had been successful and asked whether these could be replicated in other areas.

The Director of Housing responded that the storage pods at Broomhill had been successful, however, it was difficult to replicate in all areas due to space, power points and also there would be a significant cost to the Council.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

35. Resident Engagement, Building Safety

Andrew McNeil, Assistant Director, Housing Strategy:

- a. presented to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee the draft Resident Engagement Strategy for building safety for comments prior to referral to Executive.
- b. gave the background to the Strategy as detailed at paragraph 2 of the report and advised that following the Grenfell tragedy in 2017 the government launched a review to improve building safety in Higher Risk Residential Buildings.
- c. advised that the Resident Engagement Strategy for Lincoln had been developed in consultation with elected members, staff and the Lincoln Tenants Panel. It was also in line with the best practise from the housing sector.
- d. explained that the strategy set out the Council's approach to engaging with residents and had three main strands:
 - Information and understanding
 - Resident and landlords' responsibilities
 - Action to take in the event of a fire
- e. referred to the Action Plan at Appendix 2 of the report and advised that to deliver the Engagement Strategy the Council would need to meet all of the actions contained within the action plan.
- f. invited committee's questions and comments:

Question: Asked if the fire certificates covered all council properties.

Response: The fire safety certificate was for higher risk properties such as high rise buildings and did not cover all individual properties owned by the council.

Question: Commented that the fire service could only reach to floor 10 and asked if this was an issue for the high rise buildings in the City.

Response: The high rise buildings were compartmentalised and had fire doors therefore access to higher areas was via the corridors. There was no flammable material on the outside of any of our buildings.

Question: Asked how residents felt regarding the stay put policy.

Response: Having spoken to residents there was some fear regarding the stay put policy. Residents had been reassured that the circumstances would be different to the Grenfell fire and it was explained to them that each flat was a safe fire zone and that it was the best place to stay should there be a fire.

Question: Asked if sprinkler systems had been fitted in all low lying sheltered accommodation.

Response: They had been fitted in the new Derek Miller Court but were not in all sheltered accommodation as these were compartmentalised buildings.

Question: Asked if the fire station was automatically alerted to a fire in Council properties.

Response: The alarms automatically alerted the fire service for high rise and sheltered accommodation but it was not standard in all Council properties.

RESOLVED that the Resident Engagement Strategy for building safety be supported and referred to Executive for approval.

36. Next Steps Accommodation Programme Delivery

Andrew McNeil, Assistant Director – Housing Investment & Strategy

- a. presented an update on the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) including delivery costs.
- b. gave the background to the report as detailed at paragraph 2 and advised the key element of the programme was the provision of capital and revenue funding to facilitate move-on accommodation for rough sleepers who were being housed in emergency temporary accommodation following the 'Everyone In' Initiative in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- c. advised that the City of Lincoln Council successfully submitted a capital and revenue funding bid and had been under contract to deliver 15 units of dispersed accommodation using a purchase and repair model since 22 December 2020.
- d. referred to paragraph 3 of the report and gave an overview of the delivery of the NSAP Scheme advising that all 15 units had been delivered and were being used to accommodate previous rough sleepers or people at risk of rough sleeping.
- e. explained that the total capital scheme cost was £1.65m, which was £150k/ 10% over the original bid award from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) of £1.5m. The increase in cost had been funded by City of Lincoln Council and the key issues which led to the increase were detailed at paragraph 4.3 of the report.
- f. advised that although on average the Council received an average reduction in grant rate, this was still a 97.66% return rate across the project and it had not affected the financial viability of the scheme.
- g. referred to paragraph 9 of the report and gave an overview of the benefits and successes of NSAP including a case study.
- h. gave an overview of round two of RSAP and advised that work continued on the programme and a further 3 properties had been purchased.
- i. invited questions and comments:

Question: Referred to the Housing Waiting List and asked how people on the list would be affected by this accommodation.

Response: These properties were temporary accommodation for rough sleepers and were separate from the Housing Waiting List, they would not add anything to the waiting list or take away from it.

Question: Referred to paragraph 7 of the report and asked if the revenue that was still to be claimed from Homes England had been allocated.

Response: The revenue claim could be up to £51k and would be used to pay for support staff.

Question: Asked if the properties would be refurbished every time they were vacated.

Response: There would be some work that would need to be completed and this would be paid for by the scheme.

Question: Asked if residents in these properties would receive help with bedroom tax.

Response: The properties were for temporary accommodation therefore the rules were slightly different and they would not be affected by bedroom tax.

RESOLVED that

1. the implementation of the NSAP scheme and its delivery be noted.
2. the update on the NSAP two scheme be noted.

37. Performance Report -Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Andrew McNeil, Assistant Director – Housing Investment & Strategy

- a. advised members on the current performance of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Teams
- b. reported on continued prioritisation of homeless households and former rough sleepers for accommodation in line with Government guidance as detailed at paragraph 2.4 of the report
- c. advised that the Annual Official Rough Sleeping Count (undertaken on 19 November 21) found 14 rough sleepers in the city; however the team had fully complied with the Government Initiative of 'Protect and Vaccinate' introduced the week before Christmas in response to the Omicron variant and had offered suitable temporary accommodation to every rough sleeper in Lincoln. An informal routine count on 5 January 2022 found zero rough sleepers in the city
- d. detailed the current position in respect of homelessness and rough sleeping at paragraph 3 of his report
- e. reported on anticipated challenging times ahead for the teams during quarter 4 as detailed at paragraph 4 of his report
- f. requested that members note the current position relating to homelessness and rough sleeping.

Question: Referred to paragraph 4.3 of the report and asked how people who were eligible for the homelessness prevention funding had been identified.

Response: The funding was for people that had been referred as at risk or likely to be homeless shortly. Each case was looked at on its own merits and would have to prove that the loss of tenancy was directly linked to Covid-19.

Question: Referred to the Government announcement to end plan B response to the pandemic and asked if it would have an effect on how the team would operate.

Response: No, everyone who had needed help during the pandemic had received it. Staff would continue with the current way of working.

Question: Asked if the figures contained within the report included sofa surfers.

Response: They would be included in the report if they were at risk of being homeless.

Question: Asked how long someone would be homeless before they were housed.

Response: The Council would never leave anybody whose only option was to sleep on the street. We had a duty to house them.

Question: Asked how the Council helped those people that would not engage.

Response: Officers built up trust with individuals over a period of time, it generally took longer to get them accommodated.

Question: Asked if sofa surfers could be included within the report.

Response: Officers would look to see if this data could be included in future reports.

RESOLVED that the current position in relation to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in the City be noted.

38. Update on the Schedule Repairs Trial Extension

Matt Hillman, Assistant Director of Investment:

- a. presented an update on the Scheduled Repairs project delivered during the extended trial period
- b. advised that the extended Scheduled Repairs trial period began on 9th August 2021 and would be completed on 4th February 2022
- c. gave the background of the Housing Repairs Service as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report
- d. outlined the potential advantages and benefits to delivering Scheduled Repairs when compared to service delivery via the previous system. This included:
 - Tenant satisfaction
 - Operational efficiency and performance
 - Financial savings
 - Environmental impact
 - Housing stock standard
- e. referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report and explained why the trial had been extended and highlighted the factors that had influenced the data so that a like for like comparison of previous years was not possible.

- f. gave details of the issues encountered during the trial period extension in the following areas:
- Labour issues
 - Material issues related to follow on referrals
 - Booking in of repairs
- g. advised that the Scheduled Repairs trial had identified several improvements that could be introduced to further refine service delivery, these were detailed at paragraph 4.5 of the report.
- h. invited committees questions and comments:

Question: Commented that there were no contractors available for kitchens and asked when would those that need a new kitchen have it installed.

Response: New kitchens were still being referred and fitted if needed. There were the contractors in place to fit the kitchens.

Comment: Tenants were being given 1 weeks' notice for a repair, this was not enough time to rearrange time off from work.

Response: The current process was that Customer Services would log the repair and later on a Resource Planner would make the appointment.. This system was a priority to be looked at, the appointment for a repair would be booked by Customer Services which would give more notice for the tenant.

Comment: There was still an issue with duplicated appointments.

Response: The Resource planners had worked through the back log and closed any duplicates that were identified, this could be looked at again.

Comment: The red ring showers that were being installed were not fit for purpose.

Response: Occupational Therapists were advising that red ring showers should be fitted. The Council were trying to move away from electric showers altogether. If a red ring shower could not be repaired it would be under warranty.

Question: Asked if the kitchen and bathroom splash backs would be going ahead.

Response: Yes, the training had been completed and fitting could now go ahead.

RESOLVED that

1. the contents of the report be noted.
2. a further update be reported to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee in March 2022 when the pilot process had been completed.

39. Voids and Sheltered Communal Areas Update

Matt Hillman, Assistant Director of Investment gave an update on voids:

- a. advised that at the end of quarter 3, the current rent lost through vacant dwellings stood at 1.37% against the target of 0.9%, an increase of 0.07% compared to last quarter. The current void turn-around time for void requiring minor works was 51.94 days against the target of 32 days. The

current void turnaround time for all properties was 59.98 days against the target of 38 days

- b. explained that the Voids Team had experienced significant pressure throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with restrictions on the number of staff able to work within properties at any one time, shortages in labour and materials and limitations on completing pretermination inspections
- c. explained the difficulties in recruiting staff and updated that five additional contractors had been appointed and additional staff had been allocated to voids. Subsequently, an increase in the properties being completed and relet were on track to bring performance more in line with target next quarter
- d. noted that re-let times may increase initially as some of the long standing voids were returned, once these had been returned there would be a reduction in rent loss and relet times

Daren Turner, Director Housing gave an update the impact of Covid-19 on communal areas in Sheltered Housing Schemes. He gave an overview of the general measures put in place as well as the specific measures if there was a covid outbreak.

The committee discussed the contents of the report and asked the following questions:

Question: Asked if the contractors were local.

Response: Yes they were from Lincolnshire.

Question: Asked if private empty and derelict buildings could be utilised.

Response: This was an issue in the City. There were a number of tools that could be used to address this such as the Council's Empty Property Officer worked with owners to bring properties back into use, compulsory purchase orders and incentives such as Council tax charges on empty properties.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

40. Work Programme Update 2021-22

The Chair:

- a. presented the work programme for Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee for 2021/22 as detailed at Appendix A of the officer's report
- b. advised that this was an opportunity for committee to suggest other items to be included on the work programme.

RESOLVED that the content of the work programme be noted