

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor David Clarkson, Councillor Thomas Dyer,
Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor
Adrianna McNulty, Councillor Clare Smalley, Councillor
Lorraine Woolley, Councillor Pat Vaughan and Councillor
Donald Nannestad

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Lucinda Preston

53. Confirmation of Minutes - 8 December 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2022 be confirmed.

54. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

55. 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 areas:
- Homelessness
 - Tenancy Services
 - Voids
 - Housing Repairs
 - Housing Investment
 - New Build
 - Decarbonisation
 - Private Sector Housing
 - Health
- b) invited members comments and questions.

Question: Members asked what needed to be changed in Tower Blocks to get them up to an acceptable standard.

Response: A lot of information had been gathered, such as who needed help in an event of an evacuation. A full fire door review had taken place and fire doors had been upgraded. Work had taken place with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue and fire procedures needed to be continuously checked and rehearsed in order for residents and the Fire Brigade to understand what needed to be done in an emergency.

Question: A record was kept of who the tenants were in flats and members asked how rescue teams would know who was in each flat at a time of emergency as some residents work etc.

Response: Rescue teams would not know who was in each flat at what time and it would be difficult to find out.

Comment: Cllr Smalley commented that she attended the fire exercise at Shuttleworth House and found that the information provided by Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue was good, but the number of tenants that got involved was disappointing.

Question: Members asked if there needed to be more rules as to what was left in communal areas, such as mobility scooters.

Response: Mobility scooters were a problem in high/low rise areas. There was an update to the mobility scooter policy which was being presented at the next Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee Meeting.

Question: Members asked why when a repair is reported, the job gets registered as completed when though the work hadn't been completed.

Response: There were incidents where an operative had completed most of a job and then went back to finish it off but couldn't gain access to a property. There is work that needed to be done regarding this as there were issues with the IT system used as it was very old. Appointments were being re-booked without tenants being contacted which was unacceptable and needed to be changed. There were incidences of jobs being attended but the job was not what was on the list so took longer to mend but other jobs were missed in the meantime. Officers were looking at extending hours/shifts to try and accommodate tenants more.

Comment: Members commented that it would be good if tenants could be contacted to say when the operatives were on their way which may save time and journey costs etc.

Question: Members asked if a job number was created when jobs were logged.

Response: Officers were not sure and would feed this back to the committee.

Question: Members asked how repairs got reported.

Response: Most of the repairs were reported through tenants calling Customer Services and then a repair was booked.

Question: Members asked why complaints were not being responded to in a timely manner.

Response: All complaints were answered within the corporate timeframe. Complaint responses needed to be improved. A lot of complaints had been received regarding mould and damp.

Question: Members asked what the teething problems with De Wint Court were.

Response: There were issues with the electricity supply, TV licensing which were not caused by the council. Some of the final snagging had shown up some defective workmanship and ESH (the contractor) were responding to these.

Question: Members asked how the scheme for non-urgent repairs was going.

Response: The scheduled repairs scheme was being looked at currently. Repairs in the South of the city were added to a rota more quickly than the central area. As result the team were looking at changing the area boundaries to even out the number of jobs across the city.

Question: Members asked why there wasn't a section in the portfolio report for garages.

Response: Garages were briefly mentioned, however a review was taking place of garages and garage sites as there were some garages that a car would not fit into due to the change in vehicle size over the years. Some garage sites had been cleared and converted into car parking spaces. A number of sites suffered from Anti-Social Behaviour, fly tipping etc. There were also some issues with tenants creating accesses into the rear of their properties via the councils garage sites without permission, this may restrict usage options in the future.

Question: Members asked how many tenants were in arrears.

Response: This information was to be fed back to the committee.

Question: Members asked why the number of void properties in the system was not improving.

Response: There were three contractors that were working on void properties at the moment this was supplementing DLO labour There was an increased number of voids as result of tenants passing away and there were properties where repairs had not been carried out for a long time. There were properties that had been void for a long time, once they were completed it showed and added into the figures and made the percentages look worse. Until the long-term voids were completed the percentage time for voids would remain high.

Question: Members asked how many properties on average the Housing Officers each covered.

Response: Each Housing Officer looked after approximately 325 properties each.

Question: Members asked if there was a target for the amount of buy backs we aim for.

Response: Buy backs were funded by Right to Buy receipts and the target we aimed for was 15. Ex Council properties were targeted more as the properties were known to us previously. The use of the buy backs process was a balancing act as any that were purchased would automatically get added to the void stock.

Question: Members asked how many properties were under-occupied.

Response: This information would be reported back to the committee.

Question: Members asked if we had an electrical charging point policy for council tenants.

Response: There was not a policy for this and it is not something that was appearing in enquires or complaints from tenants. All the new build properties had electric car charging points fitted.

Question: Members asked how much money from the decarbonisation fund was anticipated to be received as the money hadn't been applied for as of yet and whether the work to bring Council properties up to an efficient level was going to be achieved by 2030 as this was estimated to cost £220m.

Response: There was a lot of work to be carried out on this and it was estimated to cost a lot of money. The technology was not available at the moment in order for our properties to be upgraded. The target of 2030 would have to be offset as there was not currently a solution to say for example gas boilers. The 30-year business plan was being updated; de-carbonisation was a key element of this. We didn't qualify for the initial de-carbonisation fund as government determined our properties were above the threshold for energy efficiency to qualify. A breakdown of the properties that were in each efficiency band was to be forwarded to the committee.

Question: Seventeen empty homes had been brought back into use by the end of October. Members asked if the target of 50 was going to be reached.

Response: The target may not be reached but a lot of work went on to try and find property owners.

RESOLVED that the annual report be noted

56. Portfolio Under Scrutiny Session - Reducing Inequality

Councillor Sue Burke, Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality:

a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee covering the following main areas:

- Welfare and Benefits Advice
- Welfare Reform, Covid 19 and Cost of Living Support
- Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support
- Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
- Financial Inclusion
- Skills and Training (Including Adult Learning and The Network)
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- Neighbourhood Working
- Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team
- CCTV Service
- Lincoln Community Lottery
- Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter
- Holocaust Memorial Day

b) Invited members comments and questions.

Questions: Members asked how the £200k was spent on neighbourhood working and was it justified.

Response: Investing in neighbourhood working was different to running a business as its as much about building community capacity as it is about delivering projects. A questionnaire had been sent out to try and gather data in the area on the impact of the initiative.

Question: Members asked why so little legal enforcement action was being taken for PPASB.

Response: A lot of action was taken in the form of engagement first. Warnings were issued to offenders before formal enforcement was actioned. A lot of investigation needed to take place before a fixed penalty notice was issued.

Question: Members asked if PPASB were being proactive regarding fly-tipping.

Response: The PPASB team were part of a wider team run by the Environment Agency to help tackle fly-tipping, but with limited resources within the team, each case had to be prioritised against other work demands.

Question: Members asked what engagement had taken place to try and stop fly-tipping.

Response: There had been engagement in hot spot areas in the past which proved effective. Leaflets had been handed out. There were some re-source issues, but the team were trying to be persistent.

Question: Members asked what the staff morale was like for dealing with complaints.

Response: Staff morale was fairly good and staff had received training on how to deal with difficult customers.

Question: Members asked if temporary accommodation was in the city.

Response: Temporary accommodation was spread around the city and the type of accommodation would depend on what was needed. There were arrangements in place with landlords to keep properties empty in case they were needed.

Question: Members asked whether staff and members were up to date with regards to safeguarding knowledge/training.

Response: There was a detailed training path which was tiered down staff depending on the customers that they dealt with.

Question: Members asked if there were any plans to extend CCTV coverage.

Response: This would depend on funding as a lot of the expansions that had taken place was due to external funding that was received. There were in excess of 500 cameras in the system now.

Question: Fifteen out of twenty-one actions had been completed on Equality and Diversity, with six being carried over into the following year. Members asked whether this had an effect on the 2022/23 workload.

Response: Some actions were delayed due to covid recovery. An update would be forwarded to the committee.

RESOLVED that the annual report be noted.

57. Work Programme for 2022/23

Clare Stait, Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented the draft work programme for 2022/23 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 2022/23.

RESOLVED that the work programme for 2022/23 be noted.