

Present: Councillor Calum Watt (*in the Chair*), Councillor Debbie Armiger, Councillor Chris Burke, Councillor Gary Hewson, Councillor Hilton Spratt, Councillor Rachel Storer, Councillor Dylan Stothard, Councillor Aiden Wells, Councillor Joshua Wells and Councillor Emily Wood

Also in Attendance: Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing – City of Lincoln Council, Daren Turner, Strategic Director of Housing and Investment – City of Lincoln Council, Joanne Smith, Safeguarding Lead – City of Lincoln Council, Caroline Killeavy, Chief Executive Officer – YMCA, Heidi Walton, Chief Executive – LEAP Housing, Claire McGonigle, Deputy Chief Executive – Framework Lincolnshire, Sandra Blow, Operations Manager – Framework Lincolnshire and Victoria Poulson, Democratic Services Officer – City of Lincoln Council

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Liz Bushell and Councillor Matthew Fido

45. Welcome & Apologies

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, opened the meeting with a brief round of introductions and offered a warm welcome to external guest speakers. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Liz Bushell and Councillor Matthew Fido. Councillor Gary Hewson was in attendance as substitute.

46. Confirmation of Minutes - 27 June 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

47. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Chris Burke wished it be noted that he was a member of the YMCA Board of Trustees and there was a LEAP building within the ward he represented.

Councillor Gary Hewson wished it be noted that LEAP had recently opened a building within the ward in which he represented.

48. Sheltering Our Citizens

(a) Joanne Smith, Safeguarding Lead - City of Lincoln Council

Daren Turner, Strategic Director of Housing and Investment offered his thanks to Joanne Smith, Safeguarding Lead for her attendance to Committee at short notice.

The Committee received a presentation from Joanne Smith, Safeguarding Lead (City of Lincoln Council). During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted: -

- The Local Authority Statutory Duties were contained within relevant legislation, Housing Act 1996 – Part 6 and Part 7 (as amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017)
- Part 6 of the legislation related to allocations and included the requirement to hold a housing register and have a suitable policy to set out allocation of accommodation
- Part 7 of legislation related to the provision for advice to be accessed free of charge, assistance to applicants to solve their housing situation and the provision of temporary accommodation for those believed to be in priority need
- Current numbers on the housing register were separated into three bands as follows:
 - Band 1 – 322
 - Band 2 – 477
 - Band 3 – 1046
- In 2018/19, the authority dealt with a total of 854 applications. Comparatively, in 2022/23, the number of applications received was 1331.
- The total number within the prevention band was 273 and were individuals that were threatened with homelessness. The authority participated in negotiations in an attempt to keep individuals living within the property or to undertake a planned move elsewhere
- Individuals could be within the prevention band for a total of 56 days. If an individual became homeless sooner, they would be moved into relief duty
- Once the time limit of 56 days had been reached, a decision with regard to the potential for priority need would be made. At this stage, consideration would be given to whether an individual had made themselves intentionally homeless and if they had a local connection to the city.
 - The local connection criteria required six of the last twelve months or three of the last five years spent within the city, family that lived within the city that were in regular contact or if an individual worked within the city.
- Any person with a main duty, had to be rehoused. The only exceptions included an individual that had declined an offer of suitable accommodation or had the provision of temporary accommodation removed due to their behaviour
- The numbers of homeless cases had increased but the reasons for homelessness had remained the same
- A total of 432 households had been placed in temporary accommodation: 132 in licence properties and 300 in Bed & Breakfast/Hotels
- There was a number of B&B's/hotels we used across the city but there weren't many and as such, many households ended up out of the city
- Approximately 75% of the cost of temporary accommodation was recovered through housing benefit claims
- The City of Lincoln Council resources included an allocations team, a homelessness team and a rough sleeping team

The Chair thanked Joanne Smith for the informative presentation and for her attendance to Committee at short notice.

(b) External Attendees

The Committee received a collaborative presentation from guest speakers, Caroline Killeavy, (Chief Executive Officer, YMCA), Heidi Walton, (Chief Executive, LEAP Housing), Claire McGonigle, (Deputy Chief Executive, Framework, Lincolnshire) and Sandra Blow, (Operations Manager, Framework, Lincolnshire). During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted:

- Supported accommodation included hostels, night shelters, dispersed housing, family homes, self-contained accommodation and flats
- Core funding for supported housing came from housing benefit claims
- Other sources of funding came from public contracts, grant funding, fundraising and charitable donations and self-generated income streams and public support
- Supported accommodation support was offered to all individuals that were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, some of which included victims of domestic abuse, victims of crimes, care leavers and single and young parents

Heidi Walton - Chief Executive, LEAP Housing

- LEAP Housing were a non-commissioned service further to the termination of contract with Lincolnshire County Council in 2020
- The organisation no longer supported only young people and instead, offered to support to individuals of any age which included pregnant teenagers and families
- LEAP Housing offered supported accommodation through a number of resources which included:
 - Adam Health House
 - Barlow House
 - Dispersed Housing
 - Homer House
- The ambition was to move individuals on and to prevent a dependency on the service
- Once placed in safe accommodation, individuals struggled to move on as they did not meet Band 1 or 2 criteria unless a service user was a care leaver or suffered serious mental health illness

Sandra Blow - Operations Manager, Framework, Lincolnshire

- Framework, Lincolnshire had been present in Lincoln since 2011
- The organisation offered the provision of 15 emergency self-contained flats and 44 single/shared occupancy house as part of the Lincolnshire Housing Related Support Partnership (LHRSP), commissioned by Lincoln County Council (LCC) Public Health. These were adult services and as such, there was a requirement for individuals to be aged 18+ to use the service. Additionally, individuals were required to be triaged in by the Local Authority, direct referrals were not accepted
- Additional recourses included:
 - **The Corner House (Complex Needs and Somewhere Safe to Stay)**
 - 15 self-contained flats for single adults. Commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) through the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC)

- Referrals for the service needed to be triaged in by the Rough Sleeping Team, not CoLC
- **MOSS**
- A non-commissioned service, used to move individuals on or out of LHRSP accommodation. MOSS was used for those that were able to move with a lower level of support and service users were permitted to stay for up to 2 years. Priority for the service would be given to rough sleepers
- **RSAP**
- 6 self-contained flats, commissioned by Rough Sleeping Initiative through CoLC
- **Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub**
- 9 rooms within a shared house, commissioned by DLUHC through CoLC
- Provision reduced in June 2023 and merged with the Complex Needs Service

Caroline Killeavy - Chief Executive Officer, YMCA

- YMCA had been within the City of Lincoln for 156 years and housed approximately 170 people with a multiple range of needs
- YMCA was a non-commissioned supported accommodation service
- The Nomad Centre benefitted from significant refurbishment in 2019. The centre contained en-suite rooms with lockable doors.
- The organisation aimed to move people on within 56 days and started from basics - 3 meals a day, new clothing, toiletries, sanitary products etc.
- Often service users of the centre were very vulnerable and not ready to move on
- YMCA's ambition was to move individuals through the accommodation pathway, be fit for the future and to provide good quality homes

The collaborative presentation concluded with a short summary in which the following points were noted:

- It was important to understand what support meant. Some of the individuals housed suffered with significant mental health conditions.
- Individuals often required support with:
 - Provision of safe and secure accommodation
 - Re-connection with family and friends
 - Essential documentation/access to bank accounts
 - Support with benefits claims
 - Referrals to health professionals/medication
 - Employment applications
 - Building self-worth
 - Suicide prevention and Monitoring
 - Mental and emotional wellbeing support
- The organisations shared an ethos of a holistic person-centred approach that considered the wholeness of a person, not just their homelessness
- The support offered was trauma informed care and psychological informed approaches
- Partnerships and collaborations were essentials and included work with the NHS, Lincolnshire Police, Shine Lincolnshire etc.

- What worked well?
 - Holistic Health for the Homeless Collaboration
 - Worked since 2019 and had a social worker and a mental/physical health nurse that visited the service that was in use, to carry out assessments
 - Worked in partnership with YMCA, Project Compass, City of Lincoln Council and the Police etc.
 - Rough Sleeper Drug & Alcohol Treatment
 - Intervention and work took place in service instead of an individual being required to travel for an appointment
 - Other NHS Support
 - Dental Care
 - Tuberculosis Vaccinations
 - Hepatitis C Testing/Treatment
 - Very Responsive City Centre & Neighbourhood Policing teams
- Private rentals were often shared, were in high demand and large deposits may be required
- In order to access Council accommodation, a person needed a local connection and were also required to be a priority need. Often, service users did not meet the criteria as they were safely accommodated within emergency provisions
- Other supported provision – sideways move
- The demand for services far outweighed the capacity available to accommodate
- The potential re-establishment of a regular collaborative Housing Forum for the City could prove beneficial in the resolution of bed blocking and unnecessary overstaying
- In addition, a potential revisit of the banding for individuals ready to move on from temporary/supported accommodation may contribute to a resolution.
- It was suggested that agency liaison within housing would help to improve communication

The Chair thanked guest speakers for the informative presentation from all guest speakers and Officers. The Chair welcomed comments and questions from Members of the Committee. As a result of discussions between Members and speakers, the following points were made: -

Question: Thanks given for the detailed and informative presentation. In reference to homelessness registration criteria, was that policy or legislation? Of the 300 in temporary accommodation, how many were outside of the city?

Response: The criteria derived from homelessness legislation. A number of individuals that resided in temporary accommodation would have been moved out of the City and/or County for events such as Steampunk and Graduation however would be brought back into the City afterwards. It was the case that other districts had housed individuals within Lincoln.

Comment: The Council placed those in need in the best possible accommodation. The provision of accommodation needed to be of a reasonable standard.

Comment: It may be the case that one room for a family was better than a Travel Lodge which offered no cooking facilities. If certain items were required, they would be bought for example, toasters and air fryers would be gifted. Larger items such as

beds would be purchased and the money loaned. Licensed properties would be furnished in any instance. Figures would be circulated to Members further to the meeting.

Question: What was the criteria for big items and smaller items?

Response: Smaller items would be for the value of approximately £80 however larger items such as washing machines had been purchased.

Comment: There was amount of funding reserved to furnish homes to a high standard. It was unfortunate that on occasion when individuals left the premises, some of the equipment was not present after departure. Grants were used alongside revenue support.

Comment from Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing: The Council was innovative in use of Government funding. The issue did not affect Lincoln alone, it was a country-wide problem. Homelessness was often the result of a situation in a person's life in which they did not receive support. There had been a reduction in housing budget support from Lincoln County Council (LCC) of 25%.

Comment: Support offered and given to residents from the Housing Department was admirable and had helped many residents with mental and physical health issues.

Question: Additional Council housing and social housing was needed, approximately 60 houses were sold a year. How many houses were built?

Response: Within the last five years, the CoLC provided approximately 400 additional affordable housing into their stock. A number were purchased off plan however Council land was also used. Lindum Group had been contracted to build 11 homes at Hermit Street and specific Government grants provided 40-50% of the cost before entering the open market. A great number of Right to Buy properties were being repurchased by the Council. Over 70% of the properties that were purchased under Right to Buy, were under private rental, not to the families that originally purchased them. There was not enough move on accommodation to move forward. Costs had risen significantly within the private sector rental area. There was a threshold of what costs could be covered from Housing Benefit as the local housing areas included Gainsborough. The rent level in Gainsborough had no correlation to Lincoln levels and therefore, the local housing allowance was artificially low due to the inclusion of lower priced rental areas. The CoLC often used grant funding to top up private rental costs.

Comment from Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing: Right to Buy had distorted housing stocks and as a result, approximately 80% of stock was 1-2 bed properties. Prior to Help to Buy, the spread of properties was more even.

Question: The private rental sector experienced new regulations a number of years ago. Due to this, had there been a general decrease in private sector renting?

Response: There was a number of issues in relation to the availability within the private rental sector. Firstly, there were more regulations. More recently, smaller landlords that owned 1-2 properties moved out of the market due to mortgage increases. In addition, tax advantages had been removed over years which was significant. These factors resulted in a gradual withdrawal of the number of properties available to rent. The number of individuals that required support rose

dramatically. Therefore, the result was a higher demand than supply with the supply not always being where it should be.

Comment: Further to the introduction of new Government regulation, private landlords would be required, by 2028, to ensure their properties had an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C or above. This would not be financially viable for many landlords.

Response: The removal of a Section.21 Eviction was likely to have a significant impact also.

Comment: Negotiation with landlords appeared to diminish further to the reopening of Courts after the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore, prevention figures dropped as negotiation with landlords was not possible. Landlords had chosen to sell properties instead of re-letting them.

Question: The work of County Lines and the Police was positive to hear. Rough sleeping was the most harmful thing to happen to an individual. How effective had the issue of rough sleeping been dealt with? What measures should be taken to address rough sleeping within the City?

Response: A success criterion was ultimately the removal of an individual/s from the street. As a City, collaboratively, work had been very successful. However, funding had gradually been reduced and in order to effectively support an individual, funding was required. It was important to recognise that large amounts of funding used for support came from outside of the City. There had been groundbreaking NHS projects that should be championed nationally and more work could be done to facilitate those collaborations.

Comment: Emergency accommodation facilitators were not health services or mental health professionals. It was important to work alongside other agencies, together, to support Lincoln people.

Comment: Framework, Lincolnshire were often the last agency during the early hours of the morning. Services were considerably stretched and the organisation faced many situations on a day-to-day basis without being the appropriate professionals to deal with them.

Comment: Lincoln faced a significant problem 2/3 years prior the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of rough sleepers was above 30. At the last count, the figure had reduced to 14. The number decreased to zero due to work that was carried out throughout the pandemic. Given the support and funding, this was achievable however the number had risen once again.

Question: Given Local Government criteria, how accurate was the figure?

Response: Numbers changed given the time of the year and occasionally, the time of the month.

Comment: The count of those rough sleeping had previously been carried out on a set down and involved a person bedded down as part of the count. More recently, a snapshot was taken and a meeting followed to consider anything that may have been missed. The figures submitted now were more realistic than previously.

Comment: There had been an increase of rough sleeping in two areas over the last year. Firstly, 50% of individuals housed in emergency accommodation were female. They may have had a risk that was not necessarily visible and at risk of harm from others. Secondly, there had been an increase in individuals that had lost tenancies and mortgages given the cost-of-living crisis. All vulnerabilities needed to be considered, not just a sole focus on rough sleeping.

Comment: LEAP Housing had previously experienced a 60/40% split of male to females that accessed provision. Further to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were more females within the service than males.

Comment: Collaboration with the University of Lincoln may be beneficial.

Question: It was notoriously difficult to move on from charitable organisations. How was staff morale and residents' wellbeing maintained? The work of charitable organisation was fantastic however it was not where individuals wanted to stay permanently.

Response: Recruitment was very difficult. There had been many capable and skilful people exit from organisations. This was due to do burnout and the wellbeing risk to the workforce. In addition, staff for night cover was a challenge. It was important to recognise the relentlessness of the work. Staff were encouraged to have a vocation to cope effectively.

Comment from Sandra Blow, Operations Manager – Framework Lincolnshire:

Staff witnessed trauma often and included dealing with death regularly, suicide, overdoses and occasionally, staff were the first on the scene. Therefore, organisations were heavily invested in ensuring staff wellbeing. Regular debriefs took place and staff had access to wellbeing practitioners and psychologists they could make appointments with. Staff were also offered the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) through Human Resources (HR). Individuals should not reside for longer than six months. Private rented accommodation was not used as it was unaffordable and limited. Individuals were motivated with in-house activities and volunteering to offer improvement to areas of their lives whilst they waited for housing.

Comment from Heidi Walton, Chief Executive – LEAP Housing: Staff worked with high levels of risk on a day today basis. Employees were not professionals and were not paid professional salaries. One of the greatest risks to the organisation was stable staff structures.

Comment from Caroline Killeavy, Chief Executive Officer – YMCA: All emergency accommodation providers regarded it as a privilege to work with the people the services supported.

Question: How much did emergency housing cost the CoLC per year?

Response: £975,000 would be spent on temporary accommodation. Approximately £390,000 would be reclaimed through Housing Benefit and therefore, there would be a £580,000 General Fund cost to the Council. The figure was not a Housing Revenue cost. The Local Housing Allowance was a cost not seen in relation to Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. The Local Housing Allowance for B&B accommodation was £91.00 per week in Lincoln. The cost in real terms could be as much as £600. The Council could only claim in Housing Benefit subsidy.

Question: Was it possible for the Council to offer flexibility with the housing need banding?

Response: The Council continued the allocation of properties, within the remit of the law, at the request of Members. Policy required Member approval. At the end of week commencing 18 September 2023, 86 properties were void; less than 1%. Over 60% of Council housing stock was let to those who were homeless or rough sleeping. Therefore, a revision of the banding would not offer a resolution. The Council would continue to respond to its statutory responsibilities however there was not enough housing. The CoLC supported Government initiatives which included support offered to refugees from Syria, Ukraine and Afghanistan and the asylum dispersal process which meant 177 bed spaces needed to be found within the City before the end of December 2023. Approximately 96% of asylum applications were granted and those individuals had no local connection. As such, the banding did not apply. The Council understood and recognised the benefits to health, work, mental health, families' relationships and children's development of a warm, safe, dry home.

Comment: The solution appeared to be the need for a considerable programme of social housing building.

Response: With planning permissions, a large-scale build programme could take over 2 years to take effect. The need was imminent.

Comment: It was a necessity to reconsider the provision of housing. Commercial buildings may require adaption into residential homes.

Comment: There were many houses empty within the city that were owned privately.

Response: Empty property working groups considered empty houses on a quarterly basis. The target was to consider long-term empty homes. A number within the city had been privately owned for 30 years. One private owner had agreed to open the flats above the shop so there would soon be another 3 flats available.

Comment: AirBnB was a considerable difficulty. Some streets that surrounded the Cathedral, ordinarily 2-bedroom terraced houses, were unachievably priced. AirBnB properties in the area yielded considerable amounts of money and resulted in approximately 30% occupancy. There had been discussions on the topic with the Local Government Association (LGA).

Comment: It was not comprehensible to consider where individuals would be in the absence of charitable organisations. As a city, where did Lincoln benchmark compared to other areas?

Comment from Claire McGonigle, Deputy Chief Executive – Framework Lincolnshire: Framework Lincolnshire was an East Midlands charity. The situation was grave everywhere. Situations that had historically been experienced in larger areas such as Nottingham, had now moved into smaller areas. Many pressures which include lack of social housing stock, lack of private rented, AirBnB, all combined to create the housing crisis currently experience. Lincoln was not different when compared to other areas.

Comment from Caroline Killeavy, Chief Executive Officer – YMCA: YMCA were governed locally and had local trustees. There was another 80 YMCA's across the

Country with a significant amount of devilment across all facilities. YMCA had succeeded in working with local authorities and partners and there was a raft of new builds across the Country. Speed was hampered by Lincoln having its own housing stock. The issues could be attributed to the commission process in Lincolnshire. Other areas of the country were commercially collaborative and worked with organisations outside of the commission arena.

Response: The pinch point was the Right to Buy. New build council estates required regeneration which created an additional pressure on the Council.

Comment: Individuals that slept on sofas did not qualify for Band One. It was not possible to release individuals as it would result in a regression back into a homeless situation as the Council could not house them. Should individuals in emergency accommodation be offered other types of activities to prevent Anti-Social Behaviour?

Response from Caroline Killeavy, Chief Executive Officer – YMCA: The individuals that were supported by YMCA had not received support elsewhere. Vulnerable individuals came from within the community and were residents and voters. They came from Lincoln. They were individuals from within society and organisations had attempted to work collaboratively to seek solutions. It was not possible to refuse support to those people. YMCA welcomed a visit from Members to NOMAD.

Question: How many individuals that received support from YMCA, lived in Lincoln beforehand? The presence and work of charitable organisations was invaluable however could result in pressures.

Response from Caroline Killeavy, Chief Executive Officer – YMCA: YMCA staff welcomed a visit from Members to be provided with the opportunity to witness the services and support the charity offered to vulnerable people.

Comment from Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing: The people that accessed support from charities were Lincoln people. Individuals suffered things throughout their lives that weren't effectively supported at the time and some of the residents required lifelong support. Rough sleepers had shared very interesting stories.

Comment: The invitation for Members to visit was welcomed. Consideration could be given in the future to a housing and homeless conference.

The Chair offered his thanks to guest speakers and officers for all of the information provided to Committee and for the remarkable work carried out by charities, for residents within the city.

RESOLVED that:

1. Additional information be provided by Officers in relation to:
 - A figure as to how many of the 300 in temporary accommodation were outside of the city
2. The content of all presentations be noted with thanks.

50. Work Programme 2023/24

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. Further to scoping discussions, the Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the focus of the Committee's work for the remainder of the calendar year would include an update on the Poverty Truth Commission and Youth Engagement.

It was agreed that the Poverty Truth Commission update would be brought before the Committee in November 2023. The Democratic Services Officer advised that confirmation of attendance had been received from Charlotte Brooks, Director for Local Change - LocalMotion.

It was agreed that an update on Youth Engagement would be brought before the Committee in November 2023. The Democratic Services Officer advised that confirmation of attendance had been requested from Toby Ealden, Artistic Director & CEO - Zest Theatre and Sukhy Johal MBE, Director of the Centre for Culture and Creativity - University of Lincoln.

It was agreed that Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (LPFT) be invited back before the Committee for an update on the temporary Closure of Lincolnshire's Male Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) - The Hartsholme Centre. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the item would be brought before the Committee during the first meeting of the new calendar year, 2024.

It was agreed, at the Chair's request, that Development Plus and a representative from Lincolnshire County Council be invited to attend Committee in relation to Sheltering Our Citizens. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the item would be brought before the Committee during the first meeting of the new calendar year, 2024.

It was suggested and agreed that the Armed Forces Covenant be brought before the Committee in March 2024. The Chair tasked the Democratic Services Officer with requesting attendance from representatives of The Royal British Legion, The Royal Air Forces Association, the Army and the Navy.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 14 November 2023.