

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Pat Vaughan, Councillor Alan Briggs,
Councillor Liz Bushell and Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Mark Storer

34. Confirmation of Minutes - 2 November 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

35. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

36. Lincoln Tenants' Panel Annual Report

Mick Barber, Chair of LTP updated Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee as follows:

Lincoln Tenants Panel had continued to maintain and introduce business activities through a mixture of face to face and virtual meetings. In addition to this, Lincoln Tenants Panel Chair had secured a place on the department for levelling up/housing and communities Social Housing Quality Resident's Panel.

Members of Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) provided an overview of the activities and achievements of the LTP for the period from December 2022 to December 2023:

The Lincoln Tenants' Panel over the last year has been involved in a wide range of activities. These included:

- Contributed towards the development of the 30-year business plan.
- Contributed to the 30-year business plan estate regeneration work stream consultation.
- Contributed to the kitchen refurbishment programme choices.
- Continued to engage with the Repairs Service Managers to review schedule of repairs programme.
- Continued to engage with Investment to review the communal door replacement programme.
- Continued to carry out tenants' inspections for void properties.
- Continued to engage with tenancy services and to attend estate inspections.
- Continued in the development of the HRA Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy.
- Continued to carry out quarterly reviews to assess complaints and ASB processes and procedures.
- Reviewed and revised Lincoln Standards policy.
- Reviewed and revised Tenants Involvement Strategy action plan matrix.
- Reviewed and revised communal area policy.

- Reviewed annual performance and targets.
- Reviewed garage and rents.
- Monitored performance and challenged the council over issues.
- Worked with Tenancy Services to apply and secure ASB Accreditation status.
- Joined TPAS – Tenant Participation Advisory Service
- Attended HSSC meetings and represented tenants where possible.
- Attended fire safety engagement exercises delivered in partnership with Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue and City of Lincoln Council at Trent View.
- Attended training sessions delivered by TPAS and **Four Million Homes** programme (*funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities*).
- Attended ARCH conference.

Members of LTP provided a further overview of their work plan and priorities for the next 12 months as follows:

- Complaints monitoring.
- Review of Tenant Involvement Strategy action plan matrix.
- Tenant inspection of void properties.
- Tenant estate inspections.
- Performance monitoring.
- Implementation of Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- Review of tenancy services complaints.
- Review of ASB related complaints.
- Continual review of ASB accreditation recommendations.
- Continual review of schedule of repairs.
- Continue to review communal door investment programme.
- Review of tenancy agreement.
- Review of pet policy.
- Review of rechargeable repair policy.
- Arrange for TPAS to deliver bespoke training programme.

The Chair of LTP thanked our tenants' representatives, councillors and officers for their work in supporting our panel.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

37. **Aids and Adaptations Policy**

Amy Larder, Interim Maintenance Manager:

- a) presented a report to provide information and guidance on our Aids and Adaptations service, providing clarity for service providers and users, and to seek approval for the introduction of the Aids and Adaptations Policy attached at Appendix A
- b) reported that the policy identified regulatory requirements, who was eligible to use the service, and types of adaptations that could be provided through the service, together with the approvals process and timescales for approved works

- c) described the key aims of the policy to enable the provision of a high quality and cost-effective adaptations service to assist those in need of adaptations to make informed choices about their housing options, raise awareness of the service and identify our approach in handling requests for adaptations
- d) advised that the City of Lincoln Council offered tenants permanent and temporary adaptations to their homes to ensure their homes remained suitable for their individual needs, working with partners and agencies, including Lincolnshire County Council to provide adaptations to our housing stock
- e) highlighted that within the last financial year 2022/2023 we received 221 referrals for adaptation to properties, 95 of those referrals were for major adaptations to our properties, including wet room installations
- f) emphasised that the Council was committed to ensuring council tenants and their immediate family who had a disability could as far as possible continue to live safely and independently and be able to carry out day to day activities
- g) described in further detail the contents of the aids and adaptations policy, which identified the regulatory and legal framework for who was considered for the policy, covering the following main topic areas:
 - Minor Adaptations
 - Major Adaptations
 - Referral Areas
 - Approval
 - Funding
 - Performance Monitoring
 - Communications
- h) requested agreement for implementation of the policy for Aids and Adaptations to provide clarity and to communicate the policy as identified in section 4.9 of the officer's report

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

The following questions/comments emerged from the discussions held:

- Question: Was it possible for items such as lever operated water taps and handrails on both sides of internal staircases to be installed as standard in council dwellings?
- Response: A new tap design was in the process of being sourced, however, lever taps were specifically designed to an individual's medical needs and could not be installed as standard. The standard issue was for one handrail to be installed, however, bespoke rails were also added to dwellings to suit individual medical needs.
- Comment: It would be helpful to include the availability of aids and adaptations in the Tenancy Agreement so that residents knew there was an option to offer assistance in later life.

RESOLVED that the policy for Aids and Adaptations, including communication as identified in section 4.9 of the officer's report be agreed and progressed to Executive for formal approval.

38. Allocations Breakdown April-December 2023

Alison Timmins, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) provided statistical data relating to the allocation of Council accommodation at the end of Quarter 3, April-December 2023 for member's information
- b) highlighted that:
 - With respect to lettings by band, the Council was required to ensure that any household who was homeless or threatened with homelessness was prioritised for accommodation.
 - In addition, the Council held a quota for transfer applicants to move into more suitable accommodation that met their changing needs. The target for transfers was 25% of all lettings, we were looking to increase the number of properties advertised with preference to transfers in quarter 4, to remain on target to ensure that we met local needs and Government priorities.
- c) advised that during April-December 2023, the Council allocated 410 properties, listed within her breakdown of figures by type of applicant and branding to which successful bids were made
- d) also listed further analysis of allocations by property type
- e) noted that the majority of properties allocated were flats and that the supply of houses, particularly large houses, continued to be in short supply
- f) invited members comments on the content of the report

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

The following comments/questions from members were responded to as follows:

Question: Of the 2,020 people currently on the housing register list, what percentage was added to by homeless people?

Response: The officer would investigate further and respond to members via e mail.

Question: Did homeless people include 'rough sleepers' and 'sofa surfers'?

Response: Yes, anyone with unsatisfactory housing including sofa surfers were included if they made a homeless application. Additional support was offered to rough sleepers with government funding, however, they were not offered any different housing proposal and treated the same as others on the housing register.

Question: Why didn't the Council build more bungalows to release larger houses for families?

Response: This was an option, however, bungalows tended to need a larger footprint and were more expensive to build.

Question: Were those people in temporary accommodation included in the number of people on the housing register?

Response: Yes. There were 60-70 households in temporary accommodation. Approximately 20 families were staying in hotels/bed and breakfast accommodation. Even if a homeless application had been submitted, an application to go on the housing register must also be made.

Question: People were able to register as homeless 56 days before they officially became homeless. Of these 60-70 households in temporary accommodation, how many struggled to find a property and were living in hotels/bed and breakfast accommodation?

Response: There was a constant turnover in available accommodation which included private sector housing, people moving away or going to live with relatives.

Question: Was it possible to use units similar to those being utilised at RAF Scampton?

Response: The Housing Department were looking at a range of options for temporary accommodation, however, this would have to be a last resort, being in a worst case scenario than the present situation.

Question: Was there an option to use existing buildings such as the former West Parade Police Station and Unity Square to convert into accommodation?

Response: The Housing Authority was tied by planning restrictions and some vendors potentially not always wishing to sell properties for this type of accommodation. Some buildings were not appropriate for change of use having too many shared areas for conversion to suitable accommodation. The government issued a consultation paper earlier today on changes to local allocation policy. We would wait to see what this consultation brought to the table.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

39. Estate Inspections- Feedback Process

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) provided information to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee as to how feedback was given about issues raised during annual estate inspections
- b) advised that each year a programme of Estate Inspections was carried out by Officers from Tenancy Services, Members and representatives from Lincoln Tenant's Panel (LTP); in 2023 there was also the addition of officers from the Investment Team and Housing Repairs Service
- c) highlighted that questions had been raised through Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee and Lincoln Tenants Panel about the process for providing feedback to members and tenants regarding progress on identified work
- d) stated that much of the information was recorded on spreadsheets as the current IT system could not specifically record issues raised during inspections, and due to the number logged it would be very time consuming for officers to check manually whether the job had been completed or was in progress

- e) proposed an alternative opportunity with the implementation of a new IT system to enable the process for estate inspections to be fully recorded, to allow actions to be easily identified and reported
- f) referred to the opportunity for greater involvement of LTP members in the monitoring process, subject to consultation with LTP, taking the form of a sub-group focussed on checking outcomes
- g) offered a commitment to provide feedback to all Members on any issue raised at estate inspections for their area within 8 weeks of it being completed, also a report into Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee on the number of estate inspections completed, works raised, progress on completion dates and confirmation that Members had been provided with information relevant to their area
- h) added that clear information would be provided on whether works identified would be progressed individually or as part of Estate Regeneration programmes
- i) requested Member's feedback on the content of the report.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

The following questions/comments emerged from the discussions held:

Comment: Members of LTP expressed their disappointment that figures were not currently available, however, they looked forward to the implementation of a new IT system moving forward in a positive format with information on issues raised at estate inspections.

Comment: Members offered thanks to senior officers for their presence on the housing ward walks which made a huge difference, there were however still lengthy outstanding issues.

Question: When would the IT upgrade be implemented to enable estate inspection to be recorded?

Response: This would be between May-June 2024. Long term asset investment would commence later in September 2024. We must address previous missed opportunities from estate inspections conducted and the improved technology would assist, alongside making staff more accountable in attending call-outs. There had been numerous staffing vacancies recently which had not helped, however, these posts were now filled. A senior officer would be present at each estate inspection and would carry out an audit of what happened the previous year. We were in a stronger position moving forward to provide meaningful reports.

Question: How many estate inspections would be held each year. Engagement with tenants was very important.

Response: There would be one estate inspection and a follow-up conducted by estate officers 6-7 weeks later. Officers would endeavour to give as much prior notice of the dates to Members.

Comment: Tenants came out of their homes to talk during estate inspections, often providing valuable information for officers.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the report be noted.
2. The proposal for Members to receive feedback on the outcome of estate inspections completed in their areas within 8 weeks be agreed.
3. The outcomes of future estate inspections be reported annually and programmed into Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee future work programmes.

40. Work of Tenancy Sustainability Team

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) provided a report to update Members regarding the current position in regard to tenancy sustainment within Tenancy Services
- b) highlighted that sustainment of tenancies and keeping people in their homes was a key priority for the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC), with benefits for our tenants and for us as a landlord in terms of reduced void costs, reduced income loss and decreased management costs, together with benefit to the General Fund as tenant's facing eviction were likely to apply for rehousing or assistance via the Homelessness Team
- c) reported that since the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act in 2012 tenants had faced challenges to their income such as introduction of the 'spare room subsidy', benefit cap, Universal Credit, and Personal Independence Payments
- d) added that the Pandemic in 2019, had led to a further erosion of income, not only for those on benefits, but also for those who worked full time who had seen a continued erosion of available income due to the cost-of-living crisis
- e) reported that in April 2022, Tenancy Services introduced three Housing Officers on two-year contracts, dedicated to working on our sustainment objectives to address these issues up to March 2024
- f) explained the four phases covered within the pilot Tenancy Sustainment Team and an analysis of how the project had performed against each phase at paragraphs 3 and 4 of the officers report
- g) advised that since April 2022, the team had only been fully resourced for 20% of the project; recruitment had proved difficult and when appointments had occurred, staff retention had again proved challenging due to the temporary nature of the contract
- h) emphasised that this had impacted on the service available to customers in curtailing substantial portions of its pro-active work to solely focus on income related activities which was the strength of the current Tenancy Support Team member
- i) reported that the existing Tenancy Sustainment Officer post would be extended by 6 months up to 30 September 2024

- j) advised that the Tenancy Support Team service would be reviewed and opportunities to improve overall effective sustainability of tenancies be actioned
- k) highlighted changes to the system to allow better reporting of cases and the ability to measure whether behaviour had changed as a result of interaction with the service moving forward
- l) requested Members feedback on the content of the report.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

The following questions/comments emerged from discussions held:

Question: Reference was made to the Void Support Team being able to offer a considerable proportion of 'Phase 1: pre-tenancy support for vulnerable tenants' with additional training and asked whether additional staff would be required?

Response: The support would be carried out by the Voids Admin Team and not the workforce. Some of the workload was already undertaken by the Welfare Support Team together with a degree of overlap with other services. There would be a rethink of other approaches for providing sustainability support through collaboration with other sources and different mechanisms to working effectively.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report including an update on the work completed by the Tenancy Support Team be noted.

41. Review of Empty Garages

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) presented a report to update Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee on the number of empty garages and subsequent loss of income resulting from this
- b) reported that the Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, approved by Executive in November 2023, set out the long-term income and expenditure plans for delivery of council housing and assets in the city over the next thirty years
- c) explained that:
 - The Council owned 1,134 purpose-built garages situated within 88 garage sites, with an additional 16 garage plot sites.
 - The majority of the garage stock was constructed more than 40 years ago. These garages were designed for cars which were often smaller than the average car today.
 - Car usage had also changed over time with many households requiring additional parking facilities for multiple cars.
 - Our current provision of garages was not always the best solution to resolve parking issues in our estates.
- d) reported on current garage usage as follows:
 - 775 of the garages were tenanted amounting to 68% of stock,

- 72 garages were available to let, 15 of which were in the process of signing new tenancies
 - 204 garages required repairs
 - 83 were unavailable to let
 - This had resulted in a void loss of £165,099 from April to December 2023
- e) highlighted the reasons for garages remaining void this year due to a lack of need on some sites or major works being required, with a decision to be made as to whether repairs were financially viable or whether disposal or alternative use for the sites should be considered
- f) advised that a Working Group had been in place for the last year exploring options available for garage stock
- g) outlined the potential alternative options identified by the Working Group available for each garage site, which fitted within the priorities of the HRA Business Plan and the Council's Vision priorities:
- Development of housing
 - Investment to provide better quality garages
 - Alternative parking provision
 - Change of use to provide community spaces such as play areas, green spaces etc
- h) advised that a revised Draft Garage Strategy/Action Plan would be circulated for information in due course following consultation with LTP Members and interested parties
- i) requested members feedback on the content of the report.

Members commented/asked questions in relation to the report as follows:

Comment: It was important to look at the marketing element of our existing garage stock, including availability of electrical points and cost effectiveness. Greater usage could reduce Anti-Social Behaviour.

Response: It was planned to include criteria for hire of available garage space at the time when people applied for a tenancy. There was also the potential to charge differing rent for residential/ private sector use.

Comment: There were a great deal of empty garages in good condition which could be re-let. Members in Birchwood Ward would be happy to conduct site visits with the Garage Officer in their area to identify garages fit for re-use. An advertising promotion for the garages would be useful.

Response: Officers had already completed this piece of work, although the Garage Officer would be happy to meet Birchwood councillors on site. We were looking at advertising garages using the same process as letting properties.

Comment: Could the remaining empty garages be given notice to be used for building houses?

Response: This was already being considered as part of the Garage Strategy process and also by the Strategy and Investment Team.

Comment: Different areas would involve different solutions.

Response: The Action Plan in the Draft Garage Strategy would offer a variable pricing policy. Marketing would also help.

Comment: Some residents parked their cars irresponsibly on grass verges/paths. Caged tree planting in some areas had helped.

Response: The Garden Strategy/Action Plan would look at differential pricing, aggregation, greening up of estate areas, leasing parking bay areas and carbon reduction. This review had revealed more information about garage stock than was ever known before. This involved a large piece of ongoing work.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted with thanks.

42. Housing 30-Year Business Plan: Summary of Initial Tenants' Consultation

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) presented to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee the results of the recent tenants' consultation, linked to the Council's Housing Revenue Account 30-Year Business Plan
- b) reported that the Council's HRA Business Plan approved by Executive in November 2023 set out the long-term income and expenditure plans for delivery of council housing in the city over the next thirty years, and was developed in partnership with Savills
- c) advised that the Lincoln Tenants' Panel had been involved in development of the business plan since its inception during summer 2023, prior to seeking Executive approval for the business plan, the Council also undertook a wider consultation with tenants to seek their views on their local neighbourhoods
- d) concluded that this report briefed the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the Council's approach to the tenants' consultation, and summarised the responses received.

Members commented on the low response to the consultation at 4% which was disappointing, although it was encouraging to see a different type of approach.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted with thanks.

43. Review of the Pet Policy

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) presented information relating to impact on the Pet Policy following the recent changes to the Schedule of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, relating to XL Bully dogs
- b) explained that the Government added XL Bully dogs to the list of banned dogs on 31 December 2023, followed by the second part of the ban which came into force on 1 February 2024 which made it a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales without a Certificate of Exemption

- c) referred to some City of Lincoln Council tenants who already had an XL Bully dog at their home, with a need to adopt a clear corporate policy position on the rules and responsibilities for our tenants
- d) advised that the current Pet Policy document required review in full to ensure it reflected all legislation, took into account the City of Lincoln Council's reasonable approach to keeping pets in properties and recent evidence relating to emotional support that animals could provide to tenants.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Pet Policy be reviewed in full to ensure it was up to date with legislation by 31 March 2024.
2. The council allowed current XL Bully owners to retain their pets, subject to them:
 - Obtaining permission from us to keep a pet
 - Meeting all Exemption criteria
 - Not allowing their pets to cause a nuisance.

44. Tenancy Policy

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) presented at Appendix 1 to her report, the contents of the City of Lincoln Council's (CoLC's) Tenancy Policy for members consideration prior to its implementation and publication
- b) reported that it was a requirement under the Localism Act 2011 for each local authority to produce a Tenancy Strategy, also all Registered Providers must publish a Tenancy Policy that aligned with the Tenancy Strategy; the Council as a Registered Provider was required to produce and publish a Tenancy Policy
- c) advised that the Tenancy Policy specified the different types of tenancies, licences and non-secure tenancies to be granted to new and existing Council tenants and provided a framework for which tenancies the Council would grant and the exceptions to granting the most secure form of tenure
- d) highlighted that the policy ensured the tenancy granted was compatible with the purpose of the accommodation provided, considered the housing needs of individuals and households, sustainability of the community and made best use of housing stock
- e) referred to the main content of the policy which the following areas:
 - Introductory tenancies
 - Secure tenancies
 - Non-secure tenancies
 - The use of Licenses
 - The use of Demoted tenancies

- The use of Family Intervention tenancies
- Granting of joint tenancies, succession and assignments
- New tenancy process

f) requested members consideration of the Tenancy Policy prior to implementation and publication.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

Members queried how many non-secure tenancies were in existence?

Officers advised that non-secure tenancies were given for a temporary period and therefore did not have the rights of secure tenancies. The number of non-secure tenancies would be reported back to members under separate cover.

RESOLVED that the Tenancy Policy be agreed and forwarded to Executive for approval prior to publication.

45. Adi's Legacy/Hartsholme Community Garden

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a. presented a report to update Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee regarding the request made by Adi's Legacy to lease the land to the rear of Hartsholme Shops, Morton Drive for them to manage and maintain as a community garden at a nil or peppercorn rental cost per annum
- b. advised that the land was owned by the Housing Revenue Account, as indicated in yellow at Appendix A (244m²)
- c. highlighted that due to historical anti-social behaviour, the land (and other land in the vicinity) was fenced off to prevent fly tipping, vandalism and people gathering and causing a nuisance to the shops and residents in the community
- d. reported that in September 2023, Adi's Legacy CIC approached the City of Lincoln Council and requested use of the land to create a community garden for public use in the city
- e. described Adi's Legacy (CIC):
 - A registered non-profit community interest company which provided a unique service to individuals across the city.
 - It catered to all in the community including those sleeping rough and those who had previously slept rough or living in hostel/temporary accommodation.
 - It supplied home packs, food and toiletry packs and also supported anyone in need of extra help.
 - Adi's Legacy pre-loved shop opened on 5 August 2023 and was situated at 72 Hemswell Avenue, Lincoln
- f. reported that Adi's Legacy's main aim was to bring the community together and create a safe multipurpose outdoor space for local residents to use, to help prevent loneliness and isolation and make a positive impact on those

living in the community; it aimed to involve the community in the upkeep of the area including gardening tasks, grass cutting and litter picking.

- g. stated that Adi's Legacy pre loved shop would supply drinks and snacks from the kitchen area of the shop free of charge; it currently offered hot drinks and breakfast snacks in the shop, and intended to use the utilities from the shop to provide electric for tools and water for the garden as needed
- h. advised that Adi's Legacy aimed to secure a formal lease for the land to enable them to bid for available funding to encourage community participation in looking after the garden, with assistance from volunteers already working for Adi's Legacy preloved shop and use the garden for events for the local community including barbecues, teddy bear picnics, family picnics, coffee and chat sessions, providing seating areas for all ages
- i. requested that members note the content of the report and support the granting by officers of a lease to Adi's Legacy at a peppercorn rent.

RESOLVED that the grant of lease of land to Adi's Legacy to the rear of Hartsholme Shops under delegated powers to officers at a peppercorn rent for a term of seven years or less, being terminable at the end of any year of lease or earlier should there be a breach of lease conditions be supported by members of Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee.

46. Work Programme 2023/24

The Senior Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the work programme for Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee for 2023/24 as detailed at Appendix A of the report
- a. 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 for 2023/24 be noted.