



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: MONDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2020 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Westley (Chair)
Councillor Nangreave (Vice Chair)

Councillor Aqban
Councillor O'Donnell

Councillor Pickering
Councillor Willmott

In Attendance:
Councillor Cutkelvin – Assistant City Mayor Education and Housing

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96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

98. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

AGREED:

- 1) That the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on 3 September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.
- 2) That the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on 4 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

99. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

100. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

101. COVID-19 IMPACT - UPDATE

The Director of Housing gave an update on the impact of Covid-19 on Housing Issues.

- The Housing team had been much better prepared to continue with services during the second lockdown due to lessons learned in the first lockdown. Most services had been continuing.
- Those working in the field had more robust risk assessments so they knew how to operate safely.
- The Housing register had remained open, as had the allocation of council homes.
- Work was continuing on homes for new tenants.
- Urgent repairs and work involving gas was being prioritised. Non-priority repairs had been paused.
- Tenancy Management had focussed on issues such as domestic violence, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and harassment and was contacting and supporting vulnerable people.
- STAR and District Management Teams were looking to get winter grants to vulnerable people.
- At the beginning of the pandemic there had been a large rise in rent arrears. The team had managed to bring this down to £2.4million from £2.6million but a small number of tenancies continued not to pay despite being offered help. Rent arrears evictions were not taking place during the National Lockdown or in areas with Tier 2 or 3 restrictions.
- The Council had been working with partners such as One Roof and Action Homeless on the 'Everyone In' service to provide accommodation for homeless people. The Dawn Centre was in use, 40 people were in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation and the team were looking to get these people into permanent accommodation. The Council had bid for £320,000 under the 'Next Steps' programme.
- New-build council housing was beginning to see completion and the Council were also acquiring properties from the open market.

Councillor Aqbany requested clarification on the grants offered to vulnerable people.

Director of Housing, Chris Burgin, clarified that it was set up primarily for families with vulnerabilities.

The Head of Housing for Tenancy Management and STAR service, Gurjit Kaur Minhas, further clarified that it was specifically to pay towards food and utilities for households who were vulnerable, low-earning and affected by the pandemic. 80% of the grant focussed on families with young children.

Councillor Cutkelvin emphasised the importance of keeping services agile in lockdown and noted that the Council had responded quickly to changing circumstances.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the report be sent to members of the Commission.

Councillor Nangreave joined the meeting during deliberation of this item.

102. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 20/21 UPDATE NOVEMBER 2020

The Director of Housing submitted a presentation for noting on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund Capital Programme 2020/21.

- It was reported that in Quarter 1, spending had been low as only essential works had been carried out. A slight recovery had been seen in Quarter 2, but it was unlikely that there would be a full spend in all work areas. The position was expected to be strengthened in Quarters 3 and 4.
- Work done inside properties would experience under-spend, but external works would be spent as-per budget.
- The largest budget was for Council acquisitions and new builds.
- Delays had been experienced as contractors' capacity was reduced due to demands from other organisations, staff being furloughed and staff being cautious about returning to work.
- Some tenants had been cautious about having workers in their homes and had asked for work to be delayed.
- Acquisitions were going well despite slowing in March 2020. There had been some pauses but the spend was forecasted to be as-per budget.
- Regarding the General Fund, below-budget spends were forecasted, but improvement was expected in quarters 3 and 4.
- Regarding communal and public realm works, plans had been put in place for the restyling of Ottawa Road, a landscape architect had been brought in to re-design courtyards and a consultation on the demolition of on-site garages was due to start.
- Disabled facilities grants were moving on at pace. All cases were being reviewed and pragmatic ways to expediate works were being considered.
- Delays were being experienced in fleet replacement; however, delivery was on course. New vans and vehicles had been delivered.
- Regarding right-to-by receipts, it was aimed to have fully utilised them.

Councillor Pickering asked as to whether the Council would be able to catch-up on underspends, and if this was not possible, where the money would go.

Head of Service for Housing, Simon Nicholls, responded that the Capital Programme would be re-profiled and as such would be caught up on over the next 12 months to deliver what hadn't been delivered in this financial year.

Councillor Wilmott asked if there was any scope for reprofiling the spend, so if money was unable to be spent in some areas it could be spent in others, giving the example of repurposing empty homes.

Simon Nicholls responded that there had been some reprofiling on external works such as roofing and as such more of that budget would be spent this year as capacity had been gained by not doing internal works.

Councillor Nangreave raised climate change and energy saving issues and raised queries regarding the life-span of boilers, alternatives to boilers such as hydrogen, retrofitting and whether windows were still being replaced with double-glazing or whether triple-glazing was now being used.

Simon Nicholls responded that boilers were based on a lifecycle of 15 years, but if they were in good condition they were not necessarily replaced after that time, replacement was based on referrals from gas engineers.

Retrofitting of thermal insulation was being explored on some stock and bids to government for the funding of this were being made. The government were advising a whole-house approach rather than specific items of retrofitting. The Capital Programme would be informed by decisions taken over the coming months. A date had not yet been set for when this retrofitting would be carried out.

Any future window replacement programme would be based on triple-glazing; however, this was not being done at this time.

Since March 2020, 66 acquisitions had been bought and offers had been made on 67 other acquisitions. The same process was taken as that of vacant property, when these dwellings became part of the stock, they would be subject to any improvement carried out on stock.

Councillor Cutkelvin added that the Council were very cognisant of the fact that the acquisition programme was acquiring a different type of house to the past and as such the challenges of making them carbon-neutral were different to those seen with the existing stock, so the idea of retrofitting was important and was something taken into consideration before purchasing a property.

Another area of work in retrofitting was what was offered to owner-occupied and private rented sector dwellings. If simple, inexpensive solutions could be found, then the council should help facilitate it.

With regard to tenants being cautious of having internal work done, Councillor Westley asked whether certain tenants were more likely to take this approach or whether an approach was taken on an individual basis.

Simon Nicholls clarified that each case was individual, and it was not until the team went to the house that tenants could say whether or not they wanted the work done. He added that the team were cautious with risk assessments, but they did not want to make tenants feel uncomfortable. He added that if repairs

were essential, for example if wiring was dangerous, it had to be repaired.

Councillor Westley further asked as to the situation with negotiations on the Jamie Lewis portfolio and UHL properties.

Simon Nicholls reported that the financial side had been agreed on UHL, however, the terms of the contract were still to be agreed, but this was nearing completion.

With regard to the HRA and General Fund forecast, Councillor Westley asked as to how far the original spending was being met given the new restrictions.

Simon Nicholls responded that he was confident that the forecast was realistic, and the team had managed to deliver the programme despite the lockdown. He added that the first lockdown was a steep learning curve and as a result they had been more prepared for the second lockdown.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That Simon Nicholls contact Councillor Willmott about works being done.

103. DISTRICTS AND STAR PERFORMANCE

The Director of Housing submitted a report providing the Housing Scrutiny Commission an update on the work and priorities of the Tenancy Management and STAR Service, highlighting the next steps and improvements being planned within service areas and providing an update on how the service responded and adapted service provision to support the most vulnerable tenants during the Coronavirus pandemic.

- The service provided a social landlord function to council homes as well as managing sheltered housing, leaseholder services and gypsy and traveller sites.
- During 2019-20, 18,972 service requests were dealt with.
- The percentage of new tenancies sustained over a year was 91.1%.
- Fire inspections carried out in communal areas were 99.1%.
- In 2019-20, 1487 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases were dealt with.
- The service had performed well considering the challenges of lockdown.
- Service priorities were: Improving estates and communal areas, dealing with fire safety, tackling ASB and supporting tenants.
- According to a survey of tenants in early 2020, tenants had similar priorities to those that the service had in place.
- Regarding the Environmental Budget, it was predicted that there would likely be an underspend of the £750,000 budget, but 38 schemes were in place, including external painting, parking and bedroom and bathroom conversion.
- The service was looking to spent £5million over 3 years on the St Matthew's and St Peter's estates. Initial plans for this had now been agreed.

- The Green Team were working on site and landscape architects were redesigning internal courtyards.
- The service was ensuring that they knew what people wanted in the local area, this was an ongoing project and they would regularly be updating key stakeholders.
- Regarding Supporting Tenants and Residents (STAR), the service was dealing with 500+ cases at any one-time, coaching people in life skills and building trust and relationships with householders. Some of the most complex cases involved tenants who have mental health, substance issues and/or fleeing from violence and abuse.
- The service was piloting the role of employment worker to increase the number of tenants on the pathway to work, although Covid was presenting additional challenges in this area.
- In 2019/20 1,416 short-term cases were supported, showing the perseverance of support workers.
- During the last lockdown, over 1500 food parcels were distributed.
- Lessons had been learned from the first lockdown. Offices had been closed and work had focussed on the most vulnerable and essential work such as victims of domestic violence and fire safety.
- Where people had complex needs the service aimed to sensitively let properties to them.
- During the lockdown, lower level requests were places on hold. Over 6,000 people had been contacted by telephone to see if they needed support (i.e. food parcels) and the same was being done on this lockdown. The service was in a better position to deliver services this time round as they were better equipped.
- ASB and domestic violence had increased during the last lockdown and as such these issues were being prioritised.
- More entrenched cases of ASB were coming through. Some of these were linked to crime in the area. The service was working with agencies on how to address this.
- Issues such as bed bugs and vermin were being addressed.
- The service was looking to enhance the role of Neighbourhood Housing Officers to support vulnerable tenants and the issue of longer-term supported housing was being discussed.
- The service was reviewing STAR criteria to meet the needs of tenants coming through the homelessness pathway. The need to provide intensive support so that they could maintain tenancies was recognised and as such the service were looking at what could be done to prepare people to take on tenancies.

Councillor Westley thanked the service for the work they were doing in a time of need.

Councillor Aqbany thanked the service particularly for the work they were doing in St Matthew's and St Peter's and expressed hope that relationships could be maintained.

Councillor O'Donnell relayed that the situation had been challenging in Western Ward. He asked what the average time was between houses being bought to

being occupied. He further added that houses bought under this scheme were not of a high enough standard. He further recommended installing standardized flooring in Council homes. He further asked who oversaw Community Support Grants and asked whether the incentive scheme for people to move out of bigger properties into smaller ones had been looked into any further.

Councillor Westley responded that there were constant updates on the turnaround of houses.

In relation to acquisitions, Chris Burgin responded that they had purchased 340 properties in the previous year and were in the process of purchasing 66 more this year and there were 67 which were in progress. When the programme was first started, it took time to get the resources to bring them up to standard. The level that was normally looked to be let at was no different whether it was existing stock or stock bought in. He added that it would be useful to look at the cases cited by Councillor O'Donnell to ensure that they were up to the prescribed set of standards.

Regarding funding for the Community Support grant, Chris Burgin clarified that there was a corporate pot that was administered by the Housing Benefits section and he would be happy to discuss this outside the meeting.

Gurjit Kaur Minhas further clarified that the Community Support Grants were revenues and benefits and some of the money went on furniture.

Flooring had been discussed as part of the anti-poverty strategy, and it was being explored as to how to prepare people to go into properties, it was suggested that this could be done with the STAR service. It was mentioned that there was a charity link that would floor homes, but the criteria for their service was high.

Councillor Pickering asked whether the STAR service worked with Public Health as certain types of accommodation may be unsuitable for people with certain physical and mental health needs. She also expressed desire for the intervention of the Crisis team where appropriate.

Gurjit Kaur Minas reported that Adult Social Care was being picked up, but there were issues where people didn't want to engage. She reported that she would be meeting with an officer from Public Health to look into ways to refer people to health services and quicker access routes, for example, if people didn't want to go to a GP, they could be referred to a central point.

Councillor Willmott referred to the total income maximised and asked whether this included people accessing housing benefit.

Gurjit Kaur Minhas responded that this included multiple sources including housing benefits and applications to charities.

Councillor Willmott asked as to whether there was an automatic escalation process for tenants with mental health problems who had been on the receiving

end of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

Gurjit Kaur Minhas responded that with some ASB mental health was an issue. Some people were perpetrators, and some were victims. There was no automatic escalation process but there was a referral to STAR. There were prioritisation and eligibility criteria and mental health issues did not necessarily mean there would be a referral as it was an issue of whether the person was able to sustain their tenancy, if it got to the point where sustaining a tenancy was difficult then an referral would be appropriate.

Councillor Willmott requested that the process be made more transparent to Councillors regarding the thresholds of how people could be referred in and what could be expected back.

Gurjit Kaur Minhas clarified that some people had poor mental health but were still able to sustain their tenancy.

Councillor Nangreave referred to the idea of a 'Multi-Problem Centre' known as the Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) set up in conjunction with the Police, NHS and charities to provide support for people with issues including mental health issues and substance abuse issues. She also suggested that people downsizing accommodation may also have mental health issues and asked if an agency could be put together to support them.

Councillor Cutkelvin explained that this project was attached to the Homelessness Strategy looking at a 'housing first' response for people with the aforementioned issues with 'wrap around' support to help get them into long-term accommodation. This model needed to be co-designed and co-commissioned with partners and it was necessary to approach organisations such as the Clinical Commissioning Group to establish whether they were prepared to back the project. However, many medical partners had been backed-up by Covid-19 and as such were yet ready to engage.

To further clarify, Councillor Cutkelvin explained that the STAR service was about those already in tenancies and the PIE project was aimed at preventing people from falling out of the system.

Councillor Westley remarked that there appeared to be fewer cases of ASB in Saffron Ward than in Eyres Monsell and New Parks.

Gurjit Kaur Minhas explained that historically New Parks had a high level of ASB and there appeared to be more entrenched cases in the area. She added that she was looking to meet with a local inspector to discuss how to tackle the issue.

Councillor Westley further remarked that there appeared to be some cases in Beaumont Leys Ward whereby vulnerable people had been the victim of ASB and they could not wait for help, even with Police involvement. He recognised that the Council could only work with what they had, but he wanted to do as much as possible for vulnerable people in this situation.

Councillor Cutkelvin observed that the ward Councillors for Eyres Monsell had done a good job of engaging with residents.

Chris Burgin added that New Parks had around double the housing stock of other areas and the proportion of ASB cases was actually probably low.

Councillor Westley raised concerns about people leaving food out for birds on estates attracting vermin.

Gurjit Kaur Minhas responded that they were looking to tackle tenant behaviour and that they were looking to give advice to residents on what to do and what not to do.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the report be welcomed.
- 3) That Gurjit Kaur Minhas send information to Councillor on the referral system for ASB and Mental Health.
- 4) That the issue of ASB be added as an item on a future agenda of the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

104. EXECUTIVE UPDATE - WHO GETS SOCIAL HOUSING?

The Director of Housing submitted a report providing an update to Members of the 'headline' Housing Register and Lettings data, relating to Leicester City Council's Housing Register.

- During the Covid-19 pandemic fewer properties came on to let and lets were done by direct match.
- As of 1 October, there were 6342 households on the register – an increase of 3% on last year.
- The highest demand (33%) was for two-bed accommodation.
- Overcrowding was the biggest reason for joining the register, homelessness the second biggest.
- There had been a decrease of 24% in Critical Overcrowding on the register since the previous year.
- There had been 439 lets in the last six months, a drop from 675. The drop had been explained by the effects of the pandemic on stock and fewer people moving around.
- Bands 1 and 2 accounted for 97% (418) of all lettings Band 3 accounted for 3% (21) of all lettings, mostly 1-bedroom accommodation
- 55% of lets were made to homeless households.
- 50% of lettings were 1-bed dwellings.
- From March-July housing registers across the country were closed. The government had advised councils to use direct match and let process so those in critical need had some access. In August and September, the register began to return to normal, but 40% of all lettings were done through direct lettings from April-September 2020.
- Waiting times had increased and lockdown was partly the cause of this, however there was still an increase in waiting times once they had been

adjusted to account for lockdown. It was thought that this was due to the policy of more of those housed being Band 1 and as such the lower bands were impacted and there was an overall reduction in total lettings. Since 50% of lets were 1-bed it had meant that families had needed to wait. 80% of 3-bed lets were in Band 1. Waiting times would grow due to an increase in demand and a reduction in supply.

- Work was going on to analyse the demand for adapted and accessible housing so that supply could be more equitably increased on these properties.
- Applications within bands:
 - Applications in Band 1 were steady. These were mainly from those with serious medical need, those experiencing critical overcrowding and homeless people.
 - Applications in Band 2 had decreased. These were mainly from those with moderate medical needs, those experiencing severe overcrowding and homeless people
 - Applications in Band 3 had increased. These were mainly from those experiencing non-severe overcrowding.
- Lettings were going to those with the highest priorities. Customer information had been produced to manage expectations and was broken down by size of property.
- Leicester City Council was planning to create 1500 new affordable homes over the next four years and the need to make them equitable in terms of need was recognised.
- The management of demand needed to be constantly challenged and reviewed. Three areas were being focussed on:
 - How quotas could be used to increase fairness.
 - Access and health criteria.
 - Communication and availability of data and information.

Councillor Westley suggested that the Right to Buy was causing stocks to go down and causing demand to outstrip supply.

Councillor Pickering raised the issue of under-occupancy and relayed that there would be a presentation on it soon.

Councillor Willmott recognised that people still wished to live in social housing as the Council were good landlords. He further recalled that he had advocated for 1000 council homes to be created per year and recognised that even this would not meet the predicted demand and yet the Council had significantly less social housing than this. He called upon Councillor Cutkelvin to put pressure on the Executive to do more to increase the supply of social housing. He asked if it was possible to review and increase the target.

He further asked if there had been any feedback on the customer information dashboard as to how well people had understood it.

Councillor Cutkelvin responded that they were constantly looking at ways to enable councillors to get to grips with the information to better support

residents. She was working with the Director of Housing on how to better create dialogue with councillors and residents and suggested discussing the issue at a future meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

She further responded that she would be happy to apply pressure to increase social housing and reported that she had been trying to build pace on the issue. She recognised that the Local Plan would add another element to the dynamics and also highlighted the importance of the private rented sector in finding solutions. She expressed the aim of the Council to be the best landlords in the City but conceded that they could not keep pace with the loss of stock through the Right to Buy. She added that Right to Buy purchases had slowed during Covid-19 but the Council still could not keep pace as many new houses would be subject to the Right to Buy.

She further elaborated that the Council owned a small percentage of housing in the city compared to 10 years ago and as such could not wield as much influence. Therefore, she suggested that the Council needed to look to better deals with the private rented sector so that they could better enable those in Band 3 who may not realistically get a Council home and get them into private accommodation. She recognised that private accommodation could sometimes be unsatisfactory, but she relayed that the Council were looking to develop relationships with landlords to get them to give better support to tenants.

Service Manager, Housing Solutions and Partnerships, Justin Haywood, responded that there had never been a formal survey on how well people understood the information given, but they were looking to improve the information and help Councillors convey it to constituents.

Councillor Nangreave raised the issue of overcrowding and noted that with cases of Covid-19 rising, overcrowding was a bigger problem. She stressed the need for political and financial solutions and suggested that the central government should be petitioned about the level of overcrowding and the Covid-19 infection rate and getting the government to particularly help Leicester as it was a special case in this situation. Suggested solutions included stopping the Right to Buy and increasing money available for council housing. She asked as to why there was not a fund for councils as there was for social housing associations.

She further suggested using reserves and borrowing capacity to put money into property given the low interest rates. She added that some councils had borrowed hundreds of millions of pounds to build and buy houses.

Councillor Westley urged caution as he suggested there may be further austerity in future and the consequences of Covid-19 would need to be paid for so it was possible that interest rates would increase.

Director of Housing, Chris Burgin, referred to the £70m that had been committed by the City Mayor and Councillor Cutkelvin to invest in delivering new Council housing which would be borrowed by the HRA at a low interest

rate. This would only go so far to fulfilling manifesto commitments, but additional funding would be asked for at the City Mayor Briefing. Money was available for local authorities, however, if they wished to make use of Right to Buy receipts then they could not use Homes England funding and if money from Homes England funding was utilised then money from Right to Buy receipts could not be and this increased the risk of this funding having to go back to central government.

Councillor Nangreave enquired about the possibility of the Council making use of the HomeCome housing association to build houses and sought further clarification on whether Right to Buy receipts would be used to buy or build houses or both.

Chris Burgin clarified that HomeCome was a private company that was partly owned by the Council and to source funding it would need to go through private means. He further clarified that Right to Buy receipts could be used for both building and buying and could be used with the aforementioned £70million but not with Homes England funding.

Councillor Cutkelvin added that money from Right to Buy Receipts needed to be spent within three years or it would go back to the government. However, the council was on target to spend it.

Chris Burgin further explained that the Council could retain 25% of a Right to Buy sale and utilise 30% per property. For acquisitions and new builds, the rest would have to come from another source.

Councillor Westley reiterated the need for social housing to be built and the need to aim for the target of 1000 council homes per year.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a vote of thanks be made towards Justin Haywood and his team.
- 3) That Councillor Cutkelvin explore ways of further increasing the council housing supply above the current targets.

105. EXECUTIVE UPDATE - HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY UPDATE

The Director of Housing submitted a report providing further update to Members of the Executive and the Housing Scrutiny Commission on progress in implementing Leicester's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023, since the last update to Scrutiny in February 2020.

- From March the service had needed to react and respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. They had needed to protect life and have an offer in place for people to have a safe place to live to protect them from the pandemic. This had been a challenge for the service and the sector.
- The Everyone In directive had allowed the service to help anyone in

need, including those without recourse to public funds such as people from abroad without status in this country.

- 45 bed spaces had been lost due to Covid-19 as they were classed as shared sleeping arrangements. Temporary accommodation had needed to be extended to fill gaps such as this.
- The Early Prison Release scheme had put added pressure on the service.
- More than 500 new single individuals had approached the service for help during the pandemic.
- The service had entered into swift procurement of units that were safe and self-contained. This had included block-booking hotels.
- Volunteers had provided those in Bed and Breakfast accommodation to those who did not have access to food and delivered food parcels to those who could not shop.
- 24/7 support had been provided and the Police had been worked with, so they had an access route to bring people in.
- Entrenched rough-sleepers had been brought in, and the service had been able to continue working with them in their accommodation.
- Whilst cases of Covid-19 in this accommodation had been very low and not as bad as feared, a strategy still needed to be in place to manage cases.
- Flu vaccinations had been rolled out for vulnerable homeless people.
- Whilst Covid-19 cases had recovered over the summer, the service felt the need to continue with the initiative supporting homeless people as they were very aware that there would be a second wave.
- There were currently 40 single people in Bed and Breakfast accommodation down from 180. There was a priority to move people on in the Single Homeless Pathway.
- In the Annual Spotlight count would take place in the next week and numbers on the street had reduced.
- The first aim of the strategy was prevention, the MyHOME app had added an additional optional gateway for people to get help. Prevention and recovery solutions remained high and the service were looking to sustain people's current accommodation or failing that look for new accommodation before homelessness occurred. If homelessness occurred, then the service would work to find accommodation as soon as possible.
- LCC Homelessness Prevention & Support services have made it a priority to ensure that; through effective comms, partners, information on the website, and referral processes; people at risk of homelessness are aware that services are available and are available to access when they need to. We believe this is the chief reason behind why 61% of presentations to the service are made before the person becomes homeless, compared to the national average of just 52%.
- LCC compare very well against the National average, achieving solutions for 76% of applicants since the new Act was introduced. The National average is 67%.
- 57% of outcomes resulted in sustained accommodation compared to 37% nationally.
- Regarding relief work (providing temporary accommodation), 55% of

cases were provided with a solution compared with 44% nationally. There were also fewer negative outcomes and fewer cases that needed a Main Duty Assessment than the national average. This was positive.

- In addition to advice and support, 1500 affordable homes were planned over the next four years. Additionally LLCC had bid for £2.5million of additional funding for development of settled homes for the single homeless community. There had also been an interim award of £320,000.
- The team had been invited as one of 10 areas across England to put together a delivery plan as part of the Protect programme to protect the most vulnerable homeless people with complex needs. A bid of £0.5m had been put in to support this group.
- There had been significant improvement in how the team had accessed the private rented sector to provide affordable solutions.
- Through the Private sector and HomeCome 131 tenancies had been created through schemes in 2018/19 increasing to 201 in 2019/20.
- An advice line had been created for landlords and customers struggling to maintain tenants and mortgages.
- Accommodation for families facing homelessness was being developed under the 'Homes not Hostels' scheme. All families that were in temporary accommodation were now in their own self-contained homes. 80% of families at risk of homelessness were prevented from becoming homeless. The eviction ban during lockdown had helped with this, but did not take away anxieties. Bed and Breakfast accommodation had been kept to under 6 weeks for families.
- Accommodation for singles had been provided at the Dawn Centre and some reconfiguration had taken place to make it more residential due to Covid-19. 45 residents had self-contained rooms.
- Due to the pressures on the service cause by the early release of prisoners they had been working closely with probations and prisons so that they could come into the Single Homeless Pathway. A new contract was in place for 30 units of accommodation for offenders. This included 14 units of high-support accommodation for prison leavers who need intensive support before moving into 'step-down' which is more self-contained and enables them to pick up independent skills ready for them to move on.
- The Joint working group established with children's services to develop a joint commissioning exercise continues to make progress and moves closer to completion. This will consider the supported accommodation needs of 16-25-year olds in the city. The driver behind the joint commissioning exercise is to allow LCC to provide a better range of options for young people.
- The Homeless Charter continued to encourage partner engagement to provide a better overall offer to the homeless community. PayPoints had been installed to raise money for partners within the Faith and Community Sector and provided a way for people to donate money to help homeless people who wanted to detract from them using money for alcohol or substance abuse.
- The team were keen to include PIE as part of the offer.
- The team wished to explore wet accommodation for people to be helped

with substance or alcohol issues.

Councillor Westley was disconnected from the meeting. Vice-Chair Councillor Nangreave took over as Chair.

With regard to homelessness prevention, Councillor Pickering asked as to whether people were losing homes mainly from private landlords who had ended short-term tenancies?

Head of Service, Housing, Caroline Carpendale responded that that prior to Covid-19 it had been the biggest reason, but in the last 9 months it was more due to people who had been living with families and overcrowding and people escaping domestic violence (refuge places had been kept fully available).

Councillor Westley re-joined the meeting

Justin Haywood added that ordinarily there was a 60/40 split between singles and families, however in the last two quarters 80% of cases were singles which showed the number of singles in the city who had no fixed abode.

Councillor Westley suggested that it would be useful if all members received a copy of the Private Landlord Incentive Scheme.

Councillor Willmott welcomed the report and praised the service for being flexible and adapting to the circumstances. He requested consistency in the presentation of numbers, noting that some figures were displayed as percentages whilst others were not.

Caroline Carpendale clarified that the purpose of percentages was so local figures could be compared with national figures, but local figures in real terms of Leicester could be produced.

Councillor Nangreave praised the team for quickly developing a new service.

Councillor O'Donnell asked how many people had received direct lets into permanent residence. He also asked how the team worked with housing teams in these areas as people had additional challenges going into communities. He further observed that street-lifestyles appeared to have grown during the Covid-19 pandemic and asked whether ASB had increased as a result.

Caroline Carpendale responded that there was a street-lifestyles operational group made up from the Police and homelessness services who provided support and enforcement. During lockdown there had been some difficult cases but not a big increase in new cases. Some locality matters had been observed as well as pockets that could be defined as 'hotspots' for street lifestyles and rough sleeping such as Narborough Road and a taskforce had been created to tackle them. Some street-lifestyle groups had been moving out of the city centre and some services had needed to be taken out of the city.

Regarding direct lets she replied that she did not have a figure to hand but

would contact Councillor O'Donnell with one. Following the guidance received in terms of how social housing continued to be offered during the Covid period, one of the groups was to homeless households. Along with Gurjit Kaur Minhas, a scheme of 'sensitive lets' had been carried out whereby intelligence check were done on accommodation to ensure it was suitable as they wanted tenancies to be sustainable. Tenancy management services were being worked with.

Councillor Nangreave emphasised that more needed to be done to stop overcrowding.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

106. WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Pickering proposed that ASB and crime be looked at again with an update.

Councillor Westley added that a report was due on the issue and that he was looking to set up a working party on the issue.

AGREED:

That the issue of Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime be added to the agenda for the next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

107. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Councillor Westley brought it to the attention of the commission that the government would shortly be making a decision on the Social Housing White Paper promising to strengthen standards for landlords and outlining how property ombudsmen would support tenants when things went wrong. He emphasised that the White Paper was missing a commitment to building more social housing and that there was a petition to encourage this. Councillor Westley encouraged those present to write to MPs to encourage them to get more social housing built.

The meeting ended at 8:41pm