



Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: MONDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2023

TIME: 5:30 pm

PLACE: Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

Members of the Committee

Councillor Joel (Chair)

Councillor Zaman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Adatia, Aqbany, Mahesh, O'Neill, Singh Patel and Waddington

Members of the Committee are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

For Monitoring Officer

Officer contacts:

Georgia Humby, Scrutiny Policy Officer,

Jessica Skidmore, Democratic Support Officer

Tel: 0116 454 6350, e-mail: committees@leicester.gov.uk

Leicester City Council, 3rd Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

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PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members will be asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Appendix A

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission held on 31 July 2023 and 19 September 2023 have been circulated, and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer to report on the receipt of any petitions received in accordance with Council procedures.

5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer to report on the receipt of any questions, representations or statements of case received in accordance with Council procedures.

6. RETROFITTING AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

Appendix B

The Director of Housing submits a report updating the Commission on the work the Housing Division is doing to respond to the climate emergency.

Members will be requested to note the contents of the report.

7. EMPTY HOMES UPDATE

Appendix C

The Director of Housing submits a report updating the Commission about the work the Empty Homes Team are doing to bring long term private sector homes back into use.

Members will be asked to note the contents of the report.

8. PRS STRATEGY UPDATE

Appendix D

The Director of Housing submits a report updating the Commission about the progress made with LCC's Private Rented Sector Strategy objectives.

Members of the Commission will be asked to provide any comments or feedback and note the content of the report.

9. MIGRATION UPDATE

Appendix E

The Director of Housing submits a report updating the Commission on Immigration, Migration and Asylum within the city.

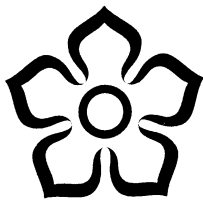
Members will be asked to provide any comments and note the contents of the report.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

Appendix F

Members of the Commission will be asked to consider the work programme and make suggestions for additional items as it considers necessary.

11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: MONDAY, 31 JULY 2023 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Joel (Chair)
Councillor Zaman (Vice Chair)

Councillor Adatia
Councillor O'Neill

Councillor Mahesh
Councillor Singh Patel

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Joel led introductions as Chair.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aqbany, Cutkelvin and Waddington.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair noted that none of the Members present were in attendance of the previous meeting, which was held during the prior election cycle.

The Chair moved that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record, which was seconded by Vice Chair, Councillor Zaman.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held 15 March 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION

AGREED:

That the Membership of the Housing Scrutiny Commission for 2023-24 be noted.

5. DATES OF MEETINGS FOR THE COMMISSION

AGREED:

That the dates of the meetings for the Housing Scrutiny Commission for 2023-24 be noted.

6. CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed the new members to the Commission and reminded members to treat each other and officers present with respect throughout the scrutiny process.

7. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

8. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

9. HOUSING OVERVIEW

The Director of Housing submitted a presentation to provide an overview of Housing Services.

Chris Burgin, Director of Housing, Justin Haywood, Head of Service (Housing) and Simon Nicholls, Head of Service (Housing) presented the presentation, and the following points were raised:

- It was noted that there were 145,000 properties in the city, with 1 in 7 being a council property, generating £80 million in revenue going directly towards housing needs. There were 19,000 council tenants.
- The Housing department provided other services such as tackling homelessness or dealing with empty properties.
- It was noted that there were two budgets available for use to the Housing Department, these are the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund, which funds the wider services of the department. There were also multiple options to bid for pots of money externally.
- The Council highlighted the loss of 350-400 properties to the right to buy scheme annually, which may later be available for rent or purchase in the private sector.
- It was noted that Housing demand was at an all-time high. It was further emphasised that the land available to build new housing to meet demand was insufficient. According to the Local Plan and agreements

with local districts, 19,000 properties would be built outside the city boundaries.

- Due to a growing issue of housing affordability, more applications had been received due to council properties being the most affordable option.
- Leicester was acknowledged to be the most overcrowded city in the East Midlands.
- There was increasing concern around evictions or threatened eviction from privately rented properties.
- It was noted that 5000 approaches had been received from people suffering from or facing potential homelessness. According to the Housing Act, the council was legally required to provide support for those under threat of homelessness and offer temporary or permanent accommodation. Leicester prevent nearly 70% of those that approach the service from becoming homeless.
- It was noted the collaboration with close partners were key to the success of the strategy and statistics were refreshed and sent out to partners every six months. Closer links had been formed with the private rented sector and housing worked closely alongside the Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services department to monitor and improve housing standards and provide support for tenants and landlords. Over 900 properties had been brought back into use through this work.
- Only 3% of housing in Leicester is currently affordable to those on low income or benefits.
- Funding had recently been received to support tenants facing drug and alcohol dependency.
- Housing noted a 96% tenancy sustainment rate with record low levels of evictions.
- All tower blocks were being installed with a sprinkler system.
- It was noted that Housing lead on asylum cases, which had a significant impact on housing demand and services. There were 300 properties that were owner and manager by the Home Office and 1000 asylum seekers currently occupying those properties. There were three asylum overflow hotels, one which had recently been acquired in 2022, and 500 asylum seekers were dispersed between these hotels. It was noted that the number of asylum seekers coming to Leicester City was increasing.

Members of the Commission discussed the presentation and the following additional points were raised:

- It was estimated that there would be around 30 rough sleepers at any one time although counts weren't exhaustive. It was later clarified that June 2023 had seen 78 rough sleepers with the number of those who had slept rough averaging around 21. The Council highlighted the strong priorities to keep rough sleepers off the street through specified accommodation, which could sleep 52 at any one time. It was noted that some who are offered the opportunity may decline the offer.
- Members enquired about the number of empty properties acquired. It

was noted that while the figures weren't available to hand, the figures would be provided to the Commission at a future date.

- It was noted that Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) were not under the jurisdiction of the Housing Department and instead fell under Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services Director, Sean Atterbury.
- It was noted that 2% or 400 of the current housing stock were currently void in comparison to 650 previously in disrepair due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that the national guidelines were about 2% to 3%.
- It was noted that the council worked closely with housing associations, some of which had formed agreements to put their own stock through the council system.
- It was noted that a set of sheltered housing stock and bungalows had been designated for older residents.
- The Director promoted the Annual Rough Sleeper street that was conducted annually in November in which officers and members interested spend the night on the streets counting and offering temporary accommodation to those rough sleeping.
- It was noted that the Dawn Centre was increasing the rooms available by 10, taking the total number to 54 single occupancy rooms. Another 44 single occupancy rooms were noted to be available and a further 15-39 spaces could be made available in the event of emergency overflow, with the former being preferable. There were over 200 other hostel units and services available for other specified groups, such as ex-prisoners and young adults.
- The Chair requested that more recent data from April 2023 be circulated to Members of the Commission at a later date.
- It was noted that work was in progress to engage and connect with forums and communities to encourage more women of ethnic minority to join the Women in Construction scheme.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted
2. That more recent data from April 2023 be circulated to Members of the Commission at a later date.

10. WHO GETS SOCIAL HOUSING

The Director of Housing submitted a report that provided an update to Members of the 'headline' Housing Register and Lettings data, relating to Leicester City Council's Housing Register, for 2022/23.

Justin Haywood, Head of Service (Housing) presented the report and the following points were raised:

- Of the biannual reports on this subject, the report provided was noted to be the 12-month year-end report.
- The Housing allocations policy was being reviewed due to concern over the number of households on the housing register.

- Households on band 3 were noted to be generally unsuccessful in obtaining a property and the Housing Department was providing advice on alternative housing options.
- Demand for wheelchair access outstripped supply.
- It was noted that the highest demand was seen in the east of the city in areas facing greater poverty such as Troon and Eyres Monsell.
- It was noted that waiting times for Band 1 had increase by 2-3 months, with waits for Band 2 increasing significantly more.
- It was noted that Band 1 households accounted for 75% of all lets which prioritised those facing homelessness, overcrowding or serious medical needs. 26% of all lets had been made through a direct offer due to the urgency of the household's situation and 81% of the direct offers had been made to homeless households.

Members of the Commission discussed the report and the following additional points were made:

- It was noted that there were a small amount of households that were occupying properties that were the incorrect size for their needs, and that Housing were not able to coerce residents in underoccupied properties to move to more appropriate properties. The Housing department were conducting a project to approach tenants in under-occupied that may be interested in a mutually beneficial exchange to improve this.
- It was clarified for the purposes of the report that when referring to the last 12 months, it referred to the period of time up until the end of March 2023.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

AGREED:

That the report be noted

11. RENT ARREARS - YEAR END REPORT

The Director of Housing submitted a report to inform the Members of the Scrutiny Commission on the rent arrears progress within the general housing stock, over the full financial year, from April 2022 to March 2023.

Head of Service, Charlotte McGraw, presented the report and the following additional points were raised:

- Excellent collection rates are being maintained with over 99.6% being collected.
- It was noted that councils were facing challenges in collecting rent and rent arrears.
- The challenges surrounding the cost-of-living crisis and expected future rent increase were acknowledged and the Housing Department emphasised the focus on tenant support and maintaining standards

within the team.

Members of the Commission discussed the report and the following points were made:

- The total amount of rent collected was noted to be £80 million.
- It was noted that the £1.725 million referred to in the report was the outstanding at the end of the month and it was clarified that while each month had an outstanding balance, the amount would be collected.
- It was noted that direct debit payments were an important factor to the high percentages of payment.
- The eight rent management advisors dealt with the most complex cases.
- It was noted that property disrepair claims had been rising both locally and nationally. Simon Nicholls, Head of Service, highlighted attempts to pre-empt disrepair cases and change the method in which the cases had been dealt with. It was further noted that residents had been approached by solicitors providing poor advice on claims on a no-win-no-fee basis, which included advising residents not to pay rent. Adjustments in the allocation of technology and legal resources had seen small improvements in the speed of addressing claims which was hoped to continue to improve.
- Members raised concern over overcrowding within the city and queried methods to increase visits to homes. It was noted that engagement with tenants had been conducted through multiple methods including home visits, mobile texts, phone calls and letters, and home visits were usually reserved for tenants that had not responded to engagement in areas of higher-level arrears. A home visit could be arranged by contacting the Housing Department. It was further noted that with the acknowledged housing crisis, demand for housing far outstripped the supply and that it wasn't feasible to visit all applicants on the housing register.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the comments made by Members be taken into consideration by the Housing Department.

12. HOUSE BUILDS AND ACQUISITIONS UPDATE

The Director of Housing submitted a report regarding the current new build council house pipeline for the next 4 years, the Council acquisition programme and other delivery routes intended to be used to meet the strategic priority target of 1500 new affordable homes for Leicester.

The Head of Service, Simon Nicholls presented the report. Members discussed the report and the following points were raised:

- Housing had continued to achieve great progress in delivering new

builds and acquisitions.

- Housing was putting in a tender for the Lanesborough Road project to go out for a contractor following the original contractor entering voluntary liquidation.
- It was noted that the majority of the acquired houses were 2-3 bedroomed homes.
- Members asked about the contractor entering liquidation. It was noted that the tender would be going out to multiple contractors due to the impact of one contractor entering liquidation managing multiple sites. It was noted that the Council had not incurred any costs from the liquidation as only the work to prepare the site had been done, the cost of which the council had paid for.
- Members were happy to see the environmental impact included in the report.
- Members enquired about the Abbey Park contractor and progress. It was noted that phase 2 had been delivered by the Housing Association and that of 117 units, 100 units were available in phase 2, all of which were affordable housing. The units would be let to applicants on the housing register.
- It was noted that the impact of increasing costs of materials had impacted budgets. Developers were required to provide a price at the beginning of the development process and achieving at cost price was a known risk.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

13. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT / HOUSING ADAPTATIONS REPORT

The Director of Housing submitted a report on the on the two schemes that deliver support for residents to remain within their existing accommodation, the Disabled Facilities Grant and Housing Adaptations.

The Head of Service, Simon Nicholls presented the item. In addition to the report, the following points were raised:

- It was noted that wait times for adaptations were dependant on the adaptation required and available resources needed to install it.
- It was noted that adaptations were recommended by Adult Social Care and were provided either through council tenant's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) adaptations or through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- It was noted that the Disabled Facilities Grant was audited yearly.

Members discussed the report and the following points were raised:

- Concern was raised about residents in first story flats accessing

adaptations. It was noted that if accommodation was unable to be made suitable via adaptations and a Personal Evacuation Plan showed that a resident was not safe to reside in their current property, then they were recommended to be rehoused to a property that had already been adapted or was suitable to install the adaptations required following contact with an occupational therapist.

- Members raised concern about the ramp adaptation shown in the report. It was noted that ramps had a 1-inch rise to every 12-inch length requirement, which was why steeper properties may require larger adaptations.
- Members questioned the decrease in number of applications. It was noted that the assessment requirements had changed and that the report statistics only showed major changes required and those that were smaller were automatically completed.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and thanked members of the commission for their comments.

AGREED:

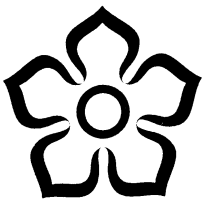
That the report be noted.

14. WORK PROGRAMME

Members were requested to forward any additional items for consideration for the scrutiny work programme be forwarded to the Chair, Vice-Chair or Scrutiny Policy Officer.

15. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no other urgent business, the meeting closed at 8:19pm.



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2023 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Joel (Chair)
Councillor Zaman (Vice Chair)

Councillor Mahesh
Councillor O'Neill

Councillor Singh Patel
Councillor Waddington

In Attendance

Deputy City Mayor, Councillor Cutkelvin – Housing and Neighbourhoods

* * * * *

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr Aqbany and Cllr Adatia.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair asked members of the commission to declare any interests for which there were none.

18. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair highlighted that the formal minutes for the meeting on 31 July 2023 were not finalised for review but will be presented to the commission at the next meeting for approval.

19. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

20. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

21. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY UPDATE

The Executive Lead Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods introduced the new draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and associated Action Plan. It was noted that the service continues to be held in high regard and the strength and importance of partnership working across the city has secured additional funding for the agile service.

The Head of Service in Housing presented the report, and it was noted that:

- There is a legal duty to formulate and develop a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This is required to be reviewed and a new Strategy formulated every five years.
- More people are presenting as homeless and seeking support as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and housing crisis amongst others whereby the service will continue to be flexible and agile.
- The main aim of the service is to prevent homelessness, but this is not always possible. The new draft Strategy will therefore be underpinned by four overarching priorities including:
 - 1) Prevention – to support households to retain within their existing property or identify an alternative property. This however is becoming more challenging with the lack of affordable homes.
 - 2) Intervention – to provide temporary accommodation for families and an extensive offer to rough sleepers where homelessness cannot be prevented.
 - 3) Recovery – to help households recover and try and ensure they do not find themselves homeless again in future.
 - 4) Partnership Working – a collaborative approach to support the needs of those who find themselves homeless or rough sleeping.

Action Homeless, One Roof Leicester and Inclusion Healthcare – homelessness partners – contributed to the discussion and commended the consultation in drafting the new Strategy. The importance of collaborative working to secure additional funding and support the increasing challenges people are facing and the complexity of needs when presenting to services was also noted.

In response to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- The service prevented two thirds of cases presenting to them but where prevention was not possible, support was provided through intervention such as temporary accommodation. Increased risk of homelessness arose because of court proceeding recommencing following the pandemic in addition to the cost-of-living crisis and increasing rental charges.

It was agreed that more details would be provided to the commission on current homelessness figures although it was noted that this may not be an accurate account but rather a snapshot of what is known to the service.
- The draft new Strategy is underpinned by an action plan which

incorporates the importance of communication. Increasing caseload of officers has made communication difficult but managing expectations through homelessness prevention plans are important.

It was agreed that the commission will be notified of key areas relating to communication within the Action Plan and this will be monitored by the commission as future updates are provided on the draft new strategy.

- The service is proud in the approach of treating anyone that presents as homeless equally and that no community should be spotlighted within the draft new Strategy.
- The Council continues to lobby the Government to increase the 28day notice period when asylum seekers are granted the right to remain to 58days.
- Recruitment and retention of officers within homelessness services is a national issue, particularly given increasing demand. The service does however have a work plan to sustain the service, but the lack of affordable housing is a challenge to sourcing permanent solutions. The Council continues to do what it can to acquire and build social housing in addition to offering incentive schemes to support tenants secure accommodation within the private rented sector such top-up payments and guarantees.
- The service continues to work with colleagues to ensure there are pathway plans in place to prevent care leavers facing homelessness. It was agreed further details and the impact of the second chance scheme will be shared with the commission.
- Services are now primarily delivered remotely but consideration could be given to attendance within the community although there are limited officers and traditionally uptake of other services within the community haven't resulted in greater engagement.
- The draft new Strategy has been developed in consultation with partners and those with lived experience, primarily the Hope Forum through Dear Albert and the Homeless Charter.
- The draft new Strategy and supporting Action Plan will remain live documents over the coming years to adapt to changes and feedback. The intention is to progress to delivery as soon as possible but clarity will be sought on processes and the requirement of seeking Full Council approval.

AGREED:

- The Commission notes the report.
- Officers are asked to consider Members comments and respond to outstanding requests for information.
- Clarity to be sought on the decision-making process for strategies and the requirement for the Homelessness Strategy to go to Full Council.

22. DAMP AND MOULD UPDATE

The Head of Service for Housing and Team Manager for Private Rented

Housing presented the item to update on the work being undertaken involving damp and mould across housing stock and the private rented sector. It was noted that:

- The tragic death of Awaab Ishak has heightened awareness and the importance of governance of damp and mould. Legislation underpins responsibilities and further regulations will be enforced in 2024 for social housing with expectations for the Council to deal with reports of damp and mould.
- A Damp and Mould Group has been established comprising of teams across different divisions to work collaboratively. An Action Plan has been formulated to deal with damp and mould in social and private housing given the awareness of health impacts. This includes greater resources for responding to additional demand of reports, inspections, and repairs as well as increased communication and advice.
- Damp and mould cases have always been a category within the housing repairs section but there has been an increase in reports with the Group using data to identify trends. Around £150k has been spent on remedial work in social housing with improved remedial and preventative solutions utilised.
- The percentage of reports locally for social housing is comparative to national figures but further work is needed to improve reporting from the private rented sector.
- The private rented sector team have secured funding that will enable initiatives such as an online portal for private tenants to report issues, streamlining inspections with the use of tablets, training officers as EPC assessors, providing advice to tenants and grants for home improvements as well as the Leicester Energy Action service.

In response to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- There will inevitably always be a backlog between reports and repairs, however increased resources have been allocated and the service is maintaining the backlog, currently at around 100 cases.
- Properties are inspected within 28 days and where remedial work is required, they are categorised. Priority one cases where damp and mould is reported in a bedroom or if there is a child or vulnerable person at the property will be completed within four weeks. Priority two cases are completed within eight weeks.
- The Council have invested in its housing stock to ensure properties are of good condition. Whilst the criteria the Regulator will be monitoring is currently unknown, the governance and processes in place ensures appropriate inspection and remedial action when damp and mould is reported.
- There are fewer reports than expected from the private rented sector, but the team are developing a portal that will enable tenants to report damp and mould with evidence.

It was agreed that more information will be shared with the commission when the portal is further developed to support testing and promoting.

- Landlords are required to provide private tenants with EPC certificates and there is also a national database to search EPC ratings. If landlords are found to be renting properties with an EPC rating of F or G the service would expect immediate improvements to sustain at least an E rating. If landlords do not comply or co-operate enforcement action can be taken.

The Chair asked the tenant and leaseholder forum representative for comments in which he noted good experience from the service when reporting damp and mould issues.

AGREED:

- The Commission notes the report.

23. REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE PERFORMANCE UPDATE REPORT

The Head of Service for Housing presented the report, and it was noted that:

- The key performance measures have remained static over several years, but ongoing outstanding repairs is a challenge. A centralised planning team has been created under a single management team to better plan and monitor outstanding repair workloads.
- The biggest challenge for the service is associated with vacancies for craft trade operatives, current running at around 20 full time posts. Measures are in place to attract officers such as a technical framework, market pay evaluation and an apprenticeship programme.
- There has been good improvement with the emergency repairs including reductions in reports categorised as emergencies and work required outside of normal working hours. This has been enabled by collaborative working with customer services, developing an online repair portal, and adjusting shift patterns for evening work.
- The gas service team continue to perform a strong compliance for annual inspections but there are outstanding day-to-day repairs that are of focus. A successful recruitment exercise for officers has supported the service and the extended use of remote technology assist is enabling a better offer for customers.
- Improvements are being seen with the voids team despite previously reporting declines to the commission as a result of the voids improvement plan. New approaches including working with utility companies to improve the transfer when a tenant leave a property, using technology to undertake survey, reconfiguring the

management team, and trialling a new initiative to enable tenants to move into properties quicker with outstanding non-essential repairs to be completed within six weeks.

In response to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- Vacancies are primarily being created as a result of an ageing workforce and officers moving roles internally. Higher wages for craft trades within the private sector is a challenge to attracting officers and therefore looking to 'grow your own' through apprenticeships.
- The apprenticeship programme can have around 30 apprentices but duration to qualification will vary dependent on the programme, i.e. a single trade or multi-trade operative.
- The use of technology has enabled efficiencies to be made in the service. Tenants are able to report repairs through the online platform and officers are able to engage with tenants via smart phones for some repairs utilising remote assist. Consideration will be given to where this can be further extended to provide a better service for customers.

AGREED:

- The Commission notes the report.

24. HEAT METERING UPDATE

The Director of Housing provided an update to the installation of metres and the proposed billing to tenants supplied by the district heating network. It was noted that:

- A decision was taken at Full Council in February 2023 to install metres in properties supplied by the district heating network to enable tenants and leaseholders to pay for their actual usage rather than the existing standard rate.
- Charges to tenants and leaseholders would continue to be subsidised and protected on the standard rate until metre installation where it is anticipated that significant savings will be made to tenants and leaseholders. There will be associated fixed charges in addition to usage charges, but the comparative bottom line is believed to be equivalent or cheaper than the domestic market.
- A contractor, Vital Energy, had been appointed and tenants had been consulted. Weekly advice sessions had been run for tenants by Council Officers and a dedicated team at Vital Energy.
- 65% of pre-inspections had been completed with 300 metres already installed and a further 300 expected next month. It is anticipated that all metres will be installed ahead of winter unless multiple visits are attempted but officers continue to engage

tenants and leaseholders.

In response to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- Tenants can choose to opt out of metre installation, but in doing so they would continue to be charged the standard rate which is likely to be significantly higher. No enforcement action will be taken against tenants or leaseholder to require installation of metres.
- The infrastructure supplying the Aikman Avenue flats is complex and therefore unviable to install metres through this project. Funding has been secured to explore potential alternative options and details will be shared once identified.
- The average usage identified within the report is based on Government predictions of usages but inevitably some households may use less or more.
- Fixed costs charged are associated with running the network, similar to boiler service, maintenance and repairs within the domestic market. Standing charges are inevitably higher than the domestic market as the district network supplies around 2,400 customers compared with utility companies supplying millions of customers to spread the cost but the bottom line is comparative.
- Charges to tenants and leaseholders for the installation of metres will be spread over ten years and assurance was given that they will be charged as per the identified cost. It was agreed figures will be reviewed within the report to reflect this.

The Chair asked the tenant and leaseholder forum representative for comments in which he commended the work undertaken by the service.

AGREED:

- The Commission notes the report.
- Officers are asked to review the figures contained within the report to be charged to tenants and leaseholders.

25. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair noted that the work programme is developing with items suggested for future meetings. Members were requested to email additional items for consideration to the Chair.

26. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.08.

Housing Scrutiny Commission Report

Climate Change and retro fit update

Housing Scrutiny commission: 30th. October 2023

Lead member for Housing: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: potentially all.
- Report author: Simon Nicholls
- Author contact details: simon.nicholls@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: V.2

1. Summary

This report updates the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the work the Housing Division are doing to respond to the climate emergency.

The HRA capital programme is reviewed annually to ensure that our ongoing programmes of works are refreshed to ensure we fit energy efficient appliances, we also review our approach to ensure that we always consider energy efficiency, this is not just to have a positive impact on carbon reduction but to reduce costs for our tenants. As a result, we always fit the most energy efficient boilers we can and have replaced all communal lights with LED fittings.

In addition to our ongoing capital programme, we have a new build council house building pipeline that is made up of 7 sites with the intention that all will be delivered to energy efficiency standards in excess of the current building regulations, this report talks about each of those sites.

We have carried out a recent review of our stock, the construction types it is made up from and the average energy efficiency of that construction type. Historically we have concentrated on our solid wall properties but now we have our RetroFit pathway report we are now able to target additional property types.

It is expected that the current heat metering project will have a positive impact on carbon reduction.

2. Recommended actions/decision

That the contents of this report be noted

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

This report had been prepared to update members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the measure the Housing Division is taking to help tackle the climate emergency.

5. Detailed report

Climate Change – Capital Programme

Our existing HRA capital Programme includes:

Boiler upgrades:

All new boilers we fit are energy efficient A rated combination boilers.

All newly fitted radiators have thermostatic radiator valves. Both these measures are being constantly reviewed to make sure we use the most energy efficient products

Insulation programme

We have an ongoing programme of upgrading loft insulation levels to our tenant's homes, this is either by request from the tenant or as a result of other works being carried out, for example a new roof being fitted. We also target areas of the city based on data we have that relates to the last insulation date and the thickness of insulation previously installed.

All our homes that have cavity walls have had cavity wall insulation

Energy Performance certificates:

We carry out EPC every time we let, sell or allow tenants to exchange a property. So far we have completed 16,000 EPC. All our loaded on the .gov websites and we use this information when submitting bids for government funding.

We hold the following EPC data that we hold for our properties. 62% of our properties have an EPC the average EPC across all the stock is C:

New Build Programme

Saffron Velodrome: 38 New homes

Saffron Lane was tendered, and the contract awarded to Robert Woodhead Construction, unfortunately they went into voluntary liquidation soon after starting on site. We are currently out to tender again and hope to be on site in early 2024.



Image of proposed street scene

Lanesborough Road: 37 New homes

Robert Woodhead's was also due to deliver Lanesborough Road but were unable to because they went into voluntary liquidation. We are currently agreeing a new delivery route for this site and the phase 2b sites that follow



Climate credentials for Saffron, Lanesborough Road and Phase 2b.

These new houses were designed based on the previous building regulations but will be assessed based on the new ones. Because they were designed to exceed them by 70% they will also exceed the current building regulations. They will have an air source heat pump that takes heat from the air and boost it to a higher temperature, the pump needs electricity to run but should use less electricity than the heat that it generates. Solar PV panels that convert solar radiation into direct current electricity. They are a very good source of renewable energy as they convert the most abundant source of energy on the earth, the sun, into the most useful source of energy, electricity.

PV panels are silent in operation, they have no moving parts, low levels of maintenance and a long-life expectancy. They are connected into the grid via an inverter and more recently battery technology has improved so the electricity can now be stored.

We are proposing installing 6 x 250-watt panels to each of the roofs with the exception of two plots that will need 8 panels to achieve the required EPC 'A' rating. Based on the above 47,972kWh/year on site renewable energy will be generated.

Forest Lodge Education Centre (FLEC) 33 New homes

Seeking to deliver 33 new affordable homes, the project is currently in the initial stages of design, having recently been submitted for pre-application advice. The proposal builds on the sustainability outputs from the more developed LANB schemes in the programme. The project team are working with the Future Homes Standard, which aims to decarbonise new homes by focusing on improving heating, hot water systems and reducing heat waste and will also be informed by the LCC sustainable toolkit. To achieve this, key design outputs being considered include the following: high performing building fabric including triple glazing, PVs, cross ventilation, and solar control measures. In addition to these measures, it has been identified that the new homes should be able to connect to the existing LCC district heating network (rather than using Air Source Heat Pumps) which will provide efficient heating and hot water to properties and make best use of the Council's existing network



Southfields Newry 53 new homes

Southfields and Newry proposals have been developed by the project design team alongside the sustainability consultants Max Fordham (who are also working on the council's corporate guidelines- 'Sustainable Construction Checklist – Residential Projects – New Build'). Solar panels will be provided to the dwellings, predominately on south facing roof slopes with some on west facing roof slopes. The layout of the site has considered orientation in relation to the sun, to maximise solar gain but also minimise heat loss. Canopies will be erected on the dwellings as a design feature to provide shading and buildings will be airtight and will all benefit from mechanical ventilation and heat recovery systems, including passive purge ventilation. Air source heat pumps will be installed in all dwellings. EV charging points are to be provided for each allocated parking space and 7 additional spaces throughout the site. The materials that have been selected for the developments total low embodied carbon potential. It is expected that if and when tender documents are prepared that high recycling of construction waste and demolition waste will be a requirement. The proposed scheme could deliver **60% emissions reductions** (against Part L 2021 notional + gas boilers) by following the energy hierarchy: efficient fabric, MVHR and heat pumps measures, before utilising solar PVs.



Stocking Farm: 50 new homes

Stocking Farm proposals have been developed by the project design team alongside the sustainability consultants Max Fordham (who are also working on the council's corporate guidelines- 'Sustainable Construction Checklist – Residential Projects – New Build') to consider a holistic approach to sustainability with the aim of achieving Net Zero Carbon and an exemplar council housing scheme for the city council in-line with the project's original vision.

The project will achieve project sustainability objectives through various ways such as site strategy, energy and carbon reduction, occupant comfort, materials and waste (85% of all demolition construction will be recycled/reused) and green and blue infrastructure. The proposed scheme is fossil fuel free. Through adoption of high-performance fabric (fabric first principles) before the deployment of low carbon and renewable energy technologies, the scheme is built with resilience against increasing fuel costs. Through this approach, the scheme seeks to minimise the demand for electricity, by designing and building to Passivhaus level operational energy use intensity (EUI) of 35 kwh/m²/yr (RIBA 2030 Climate challenge target).

Passive design measures include: enhanced U-values and air tightness improvements (to RIBA 30 standards), and active design measures including high efficiency lighting, low carbon heating (air source heat pump- ASHP) and efficient mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVRH), and achieving a 60-70% improvement on standard Building Regulations. There could be further reduction potential of 20% from installing renewables (Solar Photo-voltaic panels- PVs). The design team and Max Fordham bore in mind Passivhaus, RIBA 2030, Home Quality Mark and LETI, which all cover a wide range of KPIs. At RIBA stage 2, proposals were tested against the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP) to inform the design, and their recommendations to the client team. This was to keep the proposed design consistent with a Passivhaus target, therefore allowing the project to stay on a NZC trajectory. RIBA 2030 standards are however the main standards informing the scheme



Retrofit update

Our current strategy for improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock has been a fabric first approach focussed on improving the thermal insulation of solid wall brick properties. These are our most thermally inefficient stock type; this is borne out by the fact that the government has provided significant funding over the years to improve these property types. We have also continued to install A rated boilers and improving loft/cavity insulation in all our stock.

We have also identified 2 other priority construction types with require our attention, MHC (Midland Housing Consortium) and Steel Houses.

To-date, we have installed external wall insulation (EWI) to 1,461 solid wall properties, which have been completed as a result of government subsidy.

The stock.

We have 19266 properties split onto the following construction types

Construction Type	Number	% of Whole
Brick	11331	59%
Concrete	869	5%
Concrete Panels	3	0%
Easiform	3871	20%
MHC	578	3%
No Fines	1079	6%
Smith	198	1%
Steel	272	1%
Wood Frames	1053	5%
Blank	12	0%
Grand Total	19266	100%

The information in this report is based on the EPC data that we hold for our properties. 62% of our properties have an EPC and the scores are as follows, the average EPC across all the stock is C:

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
A	28
B	384
C	6077
D	4777
E	578
F	87
G	29
Grand Total	11960

An EPC is carried out every time a property is let when a tenant buys a property or when they exchange to another property. In total we have carried out 16,000 EPC, but only 11960 relate to the current stock.

It is worth saying that data from EPC's is static and can be up to 15 years old, they are not updated every time an improvement measure is undertaken, such as a new boiler being fitted, or loft insulation topped up. Therefore, it is very likely that we are under reporting the energy efficiency of our stock.

The Housing IT system NEC has an Energy module linked to the Assets module, which is being implemented soon, this will mean that we can lodge EPC's in NEC and when the Asset is updated, eg. a new boiler fitted, this will update the EPC rating, the information we report on will be up to date, it is hoped that this will be live in summer 2024. The EPC information for this report has been downloaded from the .gov.uk website.

Construction type and efficiency

Solid brick wall properties – Priority.

SAP scores for solid brick wall properties (874in total)

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
C	26
D	260
E	96
F	5
G	4
Grand Total	391

As of 1st September 2023 we have 874 remaining solid wall properties potentially suitable for energy efficiency improvements. However, the suitability of these properties for similar EWI schemes is becoming increasingly complex and problematic for the following reasons:

1. Approximately 400 of these properties are traditional terraced houses. Because of the nature of these houses on streets without front gardens, sadly, Planning will not allow EWI to their front elevations. Therefore, to improve the thermal efficiency of these front elevations, they will need to be insulated internally. This option is potentially more costly, and it will cause a great deal of disruption for our tenants if this work is carried out whilst properties are occupied. To help us better understand the cost implications and the other complexities of insulating these walls internally, we have completed a full EWI and IWI scheme at a property on Harrison Road. this concluded that the total cost to upgrade a Victorian terrace house is £30,500. To do this for all similar properties would cost £12.2m, currently only £4m of this could be secured via government grant, with £8.2m falling to the HRA to fund.
2. 132 of these properties are in Conservation Areas and a small number of these are listed grade 2 buildings. As such, planning will not allow EWI to be installed on the front elevations and in some cases on all elevations. In these instances, we will have to work with the Planning Department on a case-by-case basis to work out the best options for these. However, internally insulating these walls will no doubt be the main or only option available to us.
3. For the remaining 418 or so solid wall properties, there are two main issues. Firstly, some of these dwellings have a combination of cavity and solid walls. Secondly, some solid wall properties located on the same street, although outwardly looking may be very similar, these may in-fact have different Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings. For example, some of these may be rated as Band E and some Band D. Some of these differences in EPC ratings between properties might be explained by variances in the amount of loft insulation, type of boiler, number of low energy light bulbs and so on. However, some of these variations are down to how individual energy assessors have made their assessments, which in part are subjective. It costs circa £25k to EWI an estate style solid brick wall property, to complete the rest of this stock it would cost £10.5m with £4.2m secured via government grant and the £6.3m falling to the HRA

At current prices the cost to the HRA to upgrade the insulation is circa £14.5m subject to grant funding being secured at the maximum rate, this is likely to fluctuate.

Brick Cavity wall construction.

We have 8779 brick cavity wall properties

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
A	1
B	137
C	3139
D	2068
E	208
F	34
G	8
(blank)	
Grand Total	5595

These properties have an average EPC rating of C. We are not proposing to carry out any other works to these properties in the near or medium term. Funding is not currently available to carryout works on properties with an EPC of C or above

MHC property type (Midland Housing Consortium) Priority 2.

SAP scores for MHC properties (576)

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
B	7
C	88
D	278
E	33
F	1
G	2
Grand Total	409

These 576 MHC (Midland Housing Consortium) construction type dwellings that have poorly insulated walls. The gable ends of these dwellings are cavity walls. However, these cavities are very small and difficult to insulate. In addition, the front and rear elevations are wood frame construction, and these are also poorly insulated. We have recently completed a pilot scheme on 2 MHC properties at Eyres Monsell as part of SHDF wave1 to establish the work required to improve the EPC from a D to a C. The work cost £24,100k per property, £10k of which was funding by SHDF the rest from funded by the HRA.

To complete al MHC property types would cost £13.8m, with £5.7m falling to the HRA to fund

70 MHC properties are our primary focus for SHDF wave 2.1, at 2 sites, one in New Parks and one at Eyres Monsell.

A completed MHC bungalow at Eyres Monsell:



Concrete construction type, primarily St Peters Estate.

We have 821 properties classed as 'concrete'

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
B	8
C	339
D	206
E	16
F	2
G	1
(blank)	
Grand Total	572

These properties have an average EPC rating of C. We are not proposing to carry out any other works to these properties in the near or medium term. They are all connected to the district heating network.

Laings Easiform properties are constructed from concrete but have cavity wall.

We have 3,847 Laings Easiform properties

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
B	40
C	1172
D	1046
E	92
F	26
G	10
Grand Total	2386

The average EPC rating is C and as such we are not currently planning on carrying out any works to these properties in the near or medium term. funding is not currently available to carryout works on properties with an EPC of C or above.

Wimpey No Fines construction

We have 1079 Wimpey no fines properties

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
B	8
C	446
D	248
E	6
Grand Total	708

Wimpey No Fines have an average EPC rating of C, the second highest EPC rating of all our stock that hasn't had improvement works carried out or was built after 1990. We are not proposing to carry out any improvement works to this property type in the near or medium term as funding opportunities are not currently available for properties with an EPC of C or above.

Smith Construction

We have 198 Smiths construction properties

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
B	1
C	54
D	51
E	5
F	5
Grand Total	116

Smith houses have an average EPC rating of C. We are not proposing to carry out any improvement works in the near or medium term as funding is not available for properties with an EPC C or above.

Steel framed houses – Priority 3

We have 272 Steel houses

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
C	11
D	111
E	17
F	1
Grand Total	140

Steel houses have an average EPC rating of D. There are some concerns about the energy efficiency of these construction types. With the aid of a thermal imaging camera, in the future we aim to research and investigate this issue in more detail.

Timber Famed construction

We have 862 timber framed properties

Row Labels	Count of SAP Rating
B	25
C	416
D	73
E	1
F	2
Grand Total	517

The average EPC rating is C and it the highest in our stock that hasn't has improvement works carried out or built after 1990. We are not proposing to carry out any improvement works to this property type in the near or medium term as funding opportunities are not currently available for properties with an EPC of C or above.

Current funding opportunities:

The following details our most recent and current EWI projects, which form part of our ongoing Housing Division Strategy of 'Fabric First' to improve the thermal efficiency of our worst performing social stock. (This work supports our own local and the national government target to achieve Carbon Net Zero 2050)

Both schemes have targeted properties built in the early part of the twentieth century (Pre 1935), which have solid brick walls and have been provided with external wall insulation (EWI) to, in most cases improve their energy efficiency rating from an E, or low D up to EPC Band C.

Green Homes Grant Phase 2 (GHG P2)

Following on from the roll out of GHG-LAD Phase 1A & Phase 1B, BEIS launched GHG Phase 2 to support their programme to deliver low carbon measures to both low-income private sector households and also provide the opportunity for local authorities to bid for financial support to improve their social housing stock. Eligibility criteria for properties to

qualify was relaxed from the earlier phases, which enabled us to include properties from EPC band D to be eligible for solid wall insulation upgrades. Support funding per property for social stock was capped at a maximum of £5,000 per property.

Our bid for funding was subsequently approved which has enabled us to carry out external wall insulation to 56 of our properties in the Saffron area of the city. When installed, the new insulation will help people save up to an estimated £400 per year on energy bills and reduce household carbon emissions by around 900kg per annum.

Additionally, a percentage of the funding allocation was able to be used to help cover both our administration costs and the capital costs to cover PAS2035 required surveys to ensure we could identify potential properties and measures.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 (SHDF Wave1)

Wave 1 forms part of a 10-year £10 Billion government programme to support local authorities to further improve the thermal efficiency and reduce carbon emissions from their social housing stock. Qualifying criteria is again targeted at the worst performing stock with an EPC rating of Band D or lower. Financial support is more generous with this programme, based on a properties pre improvement EPC rating. A Band D home for example will attract a maximum of £10,000, lower band homes receiving more.

We have completed a further 75 properties, mainly in the Green Lane Road / Coleman area of the city with external wall insulation, along with loft insulation top ups where needed.

Future Funding opportunities

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1

Midland Net Zero Hub (MNZH) are acting a consortium lead and we are a member, they have submitted a bid which includes the external insulation of 100 MHC bungalows and the fitting of an air source heat pump as part of the refurbishment of The Leys.

Energy Company Obligation 4 (ECO4)

The government has recently announced that it is to give money to the energy companies to fund additional insulation measures, we will be working with energy companies to explore possible funding opportunities for our stock.

:

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

This report outlines the primary ways in which HRA resources are deployed to improve the energy efficiency of housing stock. The prioritisation of financial resources towards this work takes place through the annual capital budget-setting process, including annual maintenance budgets, affordable housing development and match funding for external grant bids. The ability to progress this agenda is limited by the total amount of government grant that is made available and the proportion of match funding that is required.

Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

6.2 Legal implications

Legal Services has confirmed that there are no legal implications in this report.

6.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

There are no direct equality implications arising out of the update report, however it is important to note upgrading the energy efficiency of homes is an effective way of tackling fuel poverty and can help toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Fuel poverty rates within tenures are highest within private rented homes and social housing, compared to owner-occupied homes.

Certain groups are at particularly high risk of fuel poverty. These are children, the elderly, people with existing health conditions. Poor heating and outdated heating technologies can have an effect on wider society by increasing air pollution and healthcare costs and by reducing school and workforce attendance and productivity.

Measures that help households to keep their homes warmer, reduce their energy bills and carbon emissions should lead to positive impacts for people from a range of protected characteristics. Health outcomes - living at low temperatures poses a risk to health, with a range of negative morbidity and mortality impacts associated with exposure to the cold. Improving the well-being of vulnerable households will improve the communities of those amongst which they live.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

Housing is one of the largest sources of carbon emissions in Leicester, responsible for 33% of emissions. Following the council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and its aim to achieve carbon neutrality addressing these emissions is vital to meeting our ambition. This is particularly through the council's own housing where it has the highest level of influence and control, and which represents a significant proportion of the city's housing stock.

As set out in this report, a range of projects are underway to decarbonise existing council homes and identify future opportunities, as well as delivering new low carbon council

housing in the future. These measures will also deliver a range of other benefits to residents in terms of energy costs and comfort levels. The current projects are expected to deliver significant emissions savings and, as set out in the report, work to identify future funding opportunities to deliver further improvements is ongoing. Consideration should also be given to opportunities to measure the carbon savings achieved through delivering these projects.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

Housing Scrutiny Commission

Empty Homes Update

Housing Scrutiny Commission :

Date: 30th October 2023

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Councillor Elly Cutkelvin

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: City Wide
- Report author: Joanne Russell – Head of Service (Housing)/Carole Thompson (Empty Homes Team Manager)
- Author contact details: joanne.russell@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: V.6

1. Purpose of report

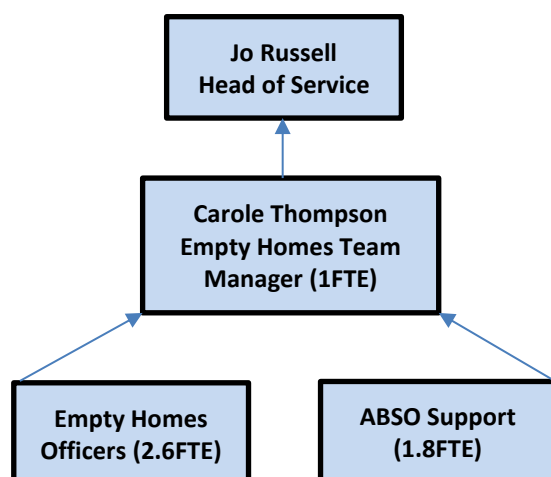
- 1.1 To update members of the Housing Scrutiny commission on the work that the Empty Homes Team are doing to bring long term private sector homes back into use.

2. Background

2.1 The purpose of the Empty Homes Team is to reduce the total number of private sector properties empty for over 18 months to prevent them becoming empty for the long term. This team brings empty properties back into use focussing on collaborating with Landlords and owners to bring family size properties back to a decent standard so that people can have access to decent homes in which to live.

2.2 Where the team are unable to obtain commitment from owners to bring properties back into use, they will negotiate terms for the purchase of properties by agreement or when unable to locate owners, we will continue to use Compulsory Purchase Powers (CPO) to bring long term empty properties back into use.

2.3 Team Structure:



2.4 Working Smarter

2.5 Empty homes officers are all experienced with good skills and local knowledge. They are flexible able to negotiate with owners on a wide range of situations, no matter what each empty property presents. The team are committed to continually working with each owner to ensure properties are returned into occupation.

2.6 The process of bringing a property back into use:

Informal stage:

- a. Contacting all owners at an early stage, giving first notification of the Empty Homes strategy, and opening dialogue enquiring of their plans to bring properties back into use.
- b. Providing advice & support and information about their options (further information is available on the empty homes' website at: <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-community/housing/privately-owned-empty-homes/>)
- c. Sending standard letters to all properties that have been vacant for 18 months, 5 years and 10 years which become incrementally more formal making the consequences of inaction clear including the potential use of a CPO.
- d. The offer of practical assistance to use leasing schemes such as renting through private agents, HomeCome or LeicesterLet.
- e. The regular contact with Empty Homes Officers is a key part of managing owners be that by letter, phone, or face to face so that we are actively supporting and encouraging them to bring their properties back into use.

Formal Stage:

- f. Requesting owners complete an on-line statement of intentions e-form and agreeing Undertakings with timescales to bring properties back into occupation. Once a plan of action with timescales is agreed, each case is regularly reviewed and if no reasonable progress is made it will progress to the legal stage of the process for consideration of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).

Legal stage

- g. Formal consideration of a Compulsory Purchase Order and a report is prepared for the Executive for approval.
- h. For those 11.7% of cases proceeding to CPO, usually involving complex cases, for example a dispute with a building contractor, a planning appeal or sibling dispute we work closely with Building Control, Planning or the owner's solicitor, therefore a lengthy legal process is inevitable and necessary as these cases will only be resolved with council intervention.

2.7 The success of the Empty Homes process

2.8 The Empty Homes process, when broken down, has a number of stages. We focus on early intervention which is hugely successful and therefore only 11.7% of cases end up with legal action. See 2.9 table below.

2.9 Analysis of Properties at each Stage as at 31/03/23 and those brought back into use.

Per Month	Total	Stage 1-3 Successfully brought back into use	Stage 1-3 (%)	Stage 4-21 Successfully brought back into use	Stage 4-21 (%)
April 2022	10	10	100.0	-	0.0
May 2022	29	24	82.8	5	17.2
June 2022	11	10	90.9	1	9.1
July 2022	15	13	86.7	2	13.3
August 2022	11	11	100.0	-	0.0
September 2022	11	9	81.8	2	18.2
October 2022	20	19	95.0	1	5.0
November 2022	13	13	100.0	-	0.0
December 2022	17	13	76.5	4	23.5
January 2023	20	19	95.0	1	5.0
February 2023	20	16	80.0	4	20.0
March 2023	20	17	85.0	3	15.0
Year to Date: Apr 2022 to Mar 2023	197	174	88.3%	23	11.7%

2.10 Most cases are brought back into use by sending letters, actively monitoring, and evaluating progress, conducting regular visits, and consulting with owners. Our experience has shown that face to face contact with owners is essential and allows the team to collaborate with the owners to get the property back into use.

2.11 Number of properties brought back into use for financial year 22/23

The Empty Homes Team brought **197** properties back in to use in 22/23 using their incremental approach.

2.12 Workflow in the team/numbers of empty properties for financial year 22/23:

The total active caseload in the Empty Homes Team has increased slightly due to new properties becoming empty. It was **368 in 2022** and by March 2023 had increased by **61 to 424**. We believe the increase is linked to COVID and the ability of owners to carry out works during this time. For example, we heard from owners that due to COVID restrictions they were unable to travel to Leicester from other cities to carry out works, they were classed as vulnerable and having to self-isolate or they were unable to source contactors during the pandemic. We also traditionally see an increase in empty properties when there is an issue with cost of living as people do not have funds available to undertake works.

2.13 Workflow Comparison from 2018-23:

Time empty	2018 baseline	2019 End of FY	2020 End of FY	2021 End of FY	2022 End of FY	2023 End of FY	Baseline Difference
18 months	292	319	330	359	368	424	+132 (45%)
5 years	52	50	47	39	41	42	-10 (-19%)
10 years	7	7	9	10	11	12	+5 (71%)

2.14 Summary of CPOs Agreed by the Executive as at 31/03/23.

During the last year we did not need to send any CPOs for approval of Executive.

Description	Apr 2011 to Mar '22	Q.1 '22	Q.2 '22	Q.3 '22	Q.4 '23	Sub Total
CPOs with Legal Services	-					2
CPOs Withdrawn before Public Inquiry as ceased to be empty	60	1			1	62
CPOs Withdrawn before Public Inquiry as status changed*	22				2	24
Public Inquiry Held CPO Confirmed	8					8
Public Inquiry Held CPO Not Confirmed	3					3
Written Representation CPO Confirmed	6					6
Written Representation CPO Not Confirmed	4					4
Non-Contested CPO's Confirmed	13				1	14
Non-Contested CPO's Not Confirmed	-					-
Total CPOs agreed by the Executive.	116					123

Note: *Status changed due to restart, misinformation, non-priority housing or second home

2.15 The team consider it is a successful outcome to have no CPO applications as this is a mark of the success of their intervention programme and this legal remedy should always be one of last resort.

2.16 **CPO Forum:** Bi-monthly forums are held with Legal Services and Estates and Building Services (EBS) to review and progress compulsory purchase cases and those undergoing negotiated purchase and sale at auction. The empty homes team also receives advice on CPO cases with complex or individual issues. The forum is good practice and has proved to be invaluable for joined up thinking, deciding ways forward for complex cases and for sharing information.

2.17 **Payment to the property owner (CPO Compensation):**

2.18 When the Council uses a CPO to purchase a property, we then quickly sell it at auction on terms that the purchaser renovates and brings the property back into use within two years. If payment to the property owner has failed, the Court then

holds the purchase funds from the sale. The owner then has 6 years to claim the funds from the sale of the property from the Court.

2.19 **Negotiated Purchases:**

2.20 Negotiated purchase can be instigated by owners or by the Council equally. The Council negotiate with interested owners to purchase their long vacant properties rather than using CPOs. This can be a quicker and cost-effective way of finding a resolution. The process has strict criteria which must not place the Council at unreasonable financial risk.

2.21 There were no negotiated purchases completed during the financial year 2022/23.

2.22 **Empty Homes Team Data:**

2.23 The Council Tax database is the prime data source for newly empty properties and is used to locate empty properties that meet our criteria that we can target to bring back into use. Each month more houses become vacant whilst some are brought back into use.

2.24 **Data Analysis:** The data is filtered and analysed monthly which ensures the quality of data held by the empty homes team is as accurate as possible with only genuinely empty properties being added to the active caseload.

2.25 **Corporate working - Council Tax:**

2.26 The Empty Homes Team collaborate closely with the Council Tax teams on our shared goals. Empty Homes Officers share information on whether properties are found to be empty or occupied. This enables Council Tax to update their records.

2.27 From April 2019, homes empty for more than two years are charged 200% council tax of occupied homes to encourage that they are brought back into use.

2.28 From April 2020, homes empty for more than five years are charged 300% council tax of occupied homes.

2.29 From April 2021, homes empty for more than 10 years are charged four times the council tax of occupied homes.

2.30 **Council Tax Charging Orders**

Council Tax now have a system in place to recover council tax arrears by using Enforced Sale or a Bankruptcy Orders. Empty Homes consult closely with Council Tax, so once an empty property reaches the stage where we are considering CPO, if there are council tax arrears, a management decision will be made on who is best to pursue the case.

2.32 Empty Homes snapshot as at 31/03/23.

General Empty Homes (Have been empty from 1 day to 17 months. These are properties that we do not intervene on due to being outside our remit)	2,681
Empty Homes Team active cases/properties (Family sized homes empty for 18 months or more)	424
Empty properties not on the team active case load (Small properties/properties within commercial units/commercial units)	397
Second Homes (Cannot legally be tackled using CPO because they currently fall outside our remit)	1,398
Total empty homes in Leicester City	4,900

2.33 The number of second homes in the city is notable, but they cannot be progressed by the Empty Homes Team because:

- a. If a property is defined as a second home under Council Tax legislation, then it is not considered legally “empty” and so the team are unable to use their Legal powers.
- b. Local Authorities have other powers around the amount of Council Tax charged and the normal powers that apply to the condition of “in use” housing such as dangerous structures, overgrown gardens etc but there are no powers to intervene with “use” as a second home as mentioned before. The legislation around abandonment would not apply either unless there were clear or stated evidence of abandonment should owners walk away from any interest in their property.
- c. Nationally and locally, there is an ongoing concern that second homes often mask genuinely empty properties.
- d. Council tax regulations split unoccupied properties into:
 - i. “vacant” (unoccupied and unfurnished) and
 - ii. unoccupied and furnished (including second homes)

2.34 If a property is classed as a second home on Council Tax and presents as boarded-up, inaccessible, overgrown gardens with numerous complaints, such properties can be the cause of much frustration to all concerned. They can bear all the hallmarks of an empty property but if classified as a second home by Council Tax the Empty Homes team are unable to proceed but as you can see from the above, we have regular dialogue to ensure we are tackling any issues in a joined-up way.

2.35 **Legal position on Second Homes:** This position has been challenged at Public Inquiry without success and the Secretary of State and Department for Levelling Up (DLUHC) have confirmed this remains the case.

2.36 The Empty Homes Team are scheduled to review this position in partnership with the Council Tax shortly and will look to introduce a Complex Property Management Meeting (CPMM) to look at the nuisance that these properties cause holistically.

2.37 **The Housing Crisis:**

The Empty Homes team are key to supporting the declared Housing Crisis by bringing Empty Homes back in to use and focussing their efforts of family sized accommodation. The work of the team not only brings properties back into use, but where compensation under the CPO legislation is not claimed, these funds are returned to the General Fund to support Council services.

2.38 The Empty Homes Team have reviewed their criteria to consider introducing properties under two bedrooms or those within commercial premises into their portfolio. At this time, given the properties most in demand in the City are for family sized accommodation the review concluded that family sized properties should continue to be the priority of the team.

2.39 Publicity – The Empty Homes Team Manager took part in an East Midlands Today report on the Housing Crisis in January 2023 which highlighted some of the key work of the team to those within the East Midlands. This was well received by the public.

3. Details of Scrutiny

Report prepared for Housing Scrutiny Commission.

4. Financial, legal and other implications

4.1 Financial implications

By bringing properties back into use, the Council benefits financially through increased collection of Council Tax and additional income through the New Homes Bonus.

Richard Hawkins, Capital Accountant, Ext 37 1791

4.2 Legal implications

The Council is entitled to acquire land and property for the purpose of providing housing in accordance with Sections 9 and 17 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended). This includes acquisition by or if considered appropriate using compulsory purchase powers. As explained in this Report the Council will need to ensure that any acquisition or other action (including use of Compulsory Purchase powers) is in accordance with the Council's adopted Empty Homes Strategy and is compliance with both the legal basis and criteria for compulsory purchase (including published guidance), namely the Guidance of Compulsory Purchase issued by the Department for Communities, Local Government and Housing). In contemplating action to acquire by way of a CPO the Council must ensure that it is able to demonstrate a compelling case in the public interest to acquire the property in accordance with the guidance, and to also ensure that it has the necessary resources (including financial resources) to proceed with a compulsory purchase.

Zoe Iliffe, Principal Lawyer, Ext 37 2180

4.3 Climate change and carbon reduction implications

Homes are responsible for a third of Leicester's carbon emissions and tackling these emissions is a vital following the council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019 and its ambition to reach carbon neutrality. Where refurbishment work is carried out to bring empty properties back into use, this may provide opportunities to improve their energy efficiency and reduce their carbon emissions. For example, this could include fitting insulation, draught proofing, low energy lighting and new heating systems, including low carbon options such as heat pumps. By reducing the need for new housing to be built, the service also helps to reduce the carbon emissions from the building of new homes, including the 'embodied' emissions of construction materials.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability, Officer, Ext 37 2284

4.4 Equalities implications

In carrying out its duties the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard, when carrying out their functions, to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not. In doing so, the council must consider the possible impact on those who are likely to be affected by the recommendation and their protected characteristics.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

There are no direct equality implications arising from the report as it is to provide an update. However, it is important to remember that bringing empty homes back into use can help towards meeting the demand for affordable housing in the city and potentially households on the housing register and provide a suitable and safe home for a local

individual or family in need of a home. Empty homes brought back into use can help to meet the diverse housing needs of all sections of our communities. Empty homes cannot solve housing supply issues alone, but they can be part of a holistic solution to provide local affordable housing and to regenerate communities. Homes become empty for a number of reasons. A home that is left empty may cause problems if it is left unattended and not secure. It can attract vandalism, tipping of rubbish, fly posting and anti-social behaviour, and soon become an eyesore. The benefits of returning an empty home into use can impact on the wider community, homes that are lived in help to support safer communities. The impacts of returning empty homes into use would be positive on people from across all protected characteristics. It is important that communications around CPO are accessible.

Surinder Singh Equalities Officer 37 4148

5. Background information and other papers:

LCC Citywide Empty Homes strategy

Council Tax statistics

Empty Homes statistics

6. Summary of appendices: N/A

7. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)? No

8. Is this a “key decision”? No



Update on LCC Private Rented Sector Strategy

Corporate Priorities for a holistic, balanced approach to issues arising from within the Private Rented Sector

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 30th October 2023

Lead Assistant Mayor: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin

Lead Strategic Director: Richard Sword

Lead Directors: Chris Burgin & Sean Atterbury

Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: All

■ Primary report authors and contact details:

Neighbourhood & Environmental Services

Rachel Hall, Head of Regulatory Service

Rachel.Hall@leicester.gov.uk

Housing

Justin Haywood, Head of Service, Housing

Justin.Haywood@leicester.gov.uk

■ Report version number: 1

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report provides a progress update to Housing Scrutiny Commission Members on LCC's Private Rented Sector Strategy objectives.

2. Summary

- 2.1. Good progress has been made across a range of workstreams. This is detailed in Part 3.
- 2.2. The following Key Performance Indicators demonstrate the impact of workstreams in progress. Regular monitoring takes place in order to continuously improve and optimise initiatives, as well as identifying any additional opportunities or new challenges.

Compliance and Standards			
	Baseline	Target direction	Forecast for 23/24
1a Number of mandatory licensed HMOs	901	Increase	▲ 1300
1b Number of properties licensed through Selective Licensing	0	Increase	▲ 4000

Compliance and Standards KPI Commentary:

The number of licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) continues to rise both as a result of new HMOs being created and licensed and officers investigating reports of unlicensed HMOs. Stock modelling indicates approximately 1000 unlicensed HMOs in the city.

Work has begun to look at the profile of HMO licence applications and income over the 5-year rolling licence period and a review of the licence fee to ensure income adequately resources a team to process applications, find unlicensed properties and take appropriate enforcement action.

The number of licensed properties in the designated areas continues to rise. The initial influx during the early bird discount period has now slowed and the team are diverting resources to engagement with large portfolio landlords and letting agents and to offering drop-in sessions for advice about licensing and help with making applications.

Homelessness & Housing Need			
2a Tenancies created via Incentive Schemes <i>Baseline on total for the 4-quarter period directly before launch of the new incentives.</i>	164 ¹	Increase	▲ Forecast for 23/24 is 200-230
2b PRS Tenancy Prevention <i>Baseline total from 21/22</i>	78%	Increase	▲ Forecast for 23/24 is 80%
2c PRS Tenancy prevention via sustainment <i>New Baseline taken from totals from 21/22</i>	38%	Increase	▲ Forecast for 23/24 is 47%
2d PRS Tenancy prevention via new solutions <i>Baseline total from 21/22</i>	40%	Increase	▼ Forecast for 23/24 is 33%
2e Prevention interventions resulting in homelessness <i>New Baseline taken from totals from 21/22</i>	22%	Decrease	▼ Forecast for 23/24 is 20%
2f Reduction in temporary accommodation use as a result of PRS evictions	35%	Decrease	▲ June snapshot is 41%

Homelessness & Housing Need KPI Commentary:

In summary we are seeing an improved level of homelessness prevention that can be directly attributed to the work of the new specialist teams:

Homelessness prevention as a result of successful sustainment of the current home is forecasted to see a 9% improvement (on the baseline) during 2023/24 (2c).

Conversely, however, it must be noted that prevention as a result of finding new accommodation solutions before homelessness occurs is forecasted to fall by 7% (2d). This is as a result of challenges brought by the housing crisis, and the ability of applicants and services to access suitable and affordable housing.

This highlights the importance of strengthening our ability to sustain accommodation. At present the improvements in this area are combatting the challenges with accessing new housing, resulting in a 2% overall forecasted improvement to prevention of homelessness despite huge challenges faced (2b).

It also highlights the importance of the Private Rental Sector (PRS) Access Schemes, as without these initiative's applicants and services would have even larger challenges in finding new accommodation solutions, and indicators at both 2b and 2d would be negatively affected.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1. Members of the Housing City Centre & Neighbourhoods Board / Housing Scrutiny Commission are recommended to;
1. Note the content of this report and provide any comment/feedback.

4 Background

- 4.1. The City Council have an ambition to ensure the private rented sector in Leicester is fit for purpose and to address where this is not the case by raising housing standards.
- 4.2. A Strategy to support this was introduced late-2021. The overall objective of the strategy is to have a holistic approach that ensures tenants and landlords are appropriately supported, as well as retaining and improving our ability to protect tenants' safety and rights, and tackle rogue/poor landlords. Maximising this, whilst maintaining a balanced, fair, and proportionate approach, will ultimately lead to the raising of housing standards within the sector.
- 4.3. This strategy focusses on six high-level priorities, five 'feeder' priorities with one central principal objective at the core – improving housing standards in Leicester's private rented housing sector:



5 Progress against the 6 priorities

5.1. IMPROVING HOUSING STANDARDS ACROSS THE SECTOR

Developments / additions to the Strategy:

5.1.1. Operation EPC (Energy Performance Certificate)

Lead Service: Regulatory Services. Status: Completed

Funding of £99K was awarded by Department of Business, Environment and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to help to LAs (Local Authorities) identify poor energy efficient properties, engage with landlords to make energy efficiency improvements.

Funding was used to:

- Train 12 staff to become Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) assessors and retrofit assessors. This upskilling of staff will ensure staff are able to correctly interpret and question EPCs and identify measures landlords should take to improve their properties.
- Develop an online portal for tenants in the PRS to report issues with their properties. The portal will also provide help and advice such as how to reduce damp and mould and energy efficiency advice
- Introduce the use of inspection tablets to streamline inspections. Information submitted by tenants through the portal will be downloaded to a tablet. Inspectors will complete inspection notes, take photographs using the tablet and download to a case management system

Progress on ongoing workstreams:

5.1.2. Selective licensing

Lead Service: Regulatory Services. Status: On-going Oct 2022-Sept 2027

The Selective Licensing scheme was granted approval at Full Council on the 7th July 2022.

The scheme launched on the 10th October 2022. This involved the setting up of a new team to process applications and issue licences.

The scheme commenced with several discounts, including early bird applications, licence applicants who are accredited by a recognised body, and where landlords have undertaken EPC work to their properties.

The scheme requires an inspection prior to issuing a licence to ensure the properties are free of any severe hazards. 103 Category 1 hazards have been identified following 2,188 inspections and 1801 (75%) of properties have received minor works letters to bring the properties up to a decent standard. At the end of September 2023 2,400 licences have been issued.

5.1.3. Mandatory HMO Licensing

Lead Service: Regulatory Services. Status: On-going

A Stock Modelling Report in 2019 indicated there were 2,300 licensable HMOs in the city at the time there were approximately 700 licenses. Work started in late 2019 to identify unlicensed HMOs but had to be paused during the pandemic. (Identification of an unlicensed HMO involves an unannounced visit to the property)

At end of September 2023 there were 1,100 licensed HMO.

Work has begun to profile expected licence applications and income over the 5-year rolling licence period along with a review of the licence fee. The licence fee will reflect the time spent to receive and process an application and issue a licence and will be set to adequately resource a team to process applications, find unlicensed properties and take appropriate enforcement action.

5.1.4. Consider the viability and benefits of extending Repayable Home Repair Loan (RHRL) into the private rented sector

Lead Service: Housing Development. Status: Ongoing

A successful bid was submitted via the General Fund capital bidding process for £200k in 23/24 to be able to continue with this scheme.

5.1.5. Discretionary Licensing

Lead Service: Regulatory Services. Status: Under consideration

The public consultation undertaken in 2021-22 to gauge opinion about discretionary licensing found considerable support for Additional Licensing (licensing of 3 and 4 person HMOs). A business case is being developed to look at the potential scope of an Additional Licensing Scheme. This will include a review of the data to determine if the PRS and in particular small HMOs would benefit from Additional Licensing, and development of a financial model to ensure such a scheme is adequately resourced.

5.1.6. Carry out a range of planning-based initiatives

Lead Service: Planning. Status: Ongoing

A new Local Plan has been submitted for is currently at the submission stage with an Examination, with hearings expected in early 2025 The Draft Local Plan includes extensive policy and supporting evidence on design expectations, managing the impacts of HMOs and other typologies. The policies do however need to comply with Government Guidance and pass Examination by a Government Inspector.

5.2. IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE SECTOR LANDLORDS AND TENANTS

Developments / additions to the Strategy:

5.2.1. Anti-poverty initiatives

Lead Service: Combined. Status: Ongoing.

As we head into autumn and winter 2023, the cost-of-living crisis continues to have serious impacts on the residents of Leicester.

The City Council has continued to deliver a range of programmes and interventions to address the rising cost of living.

There is still a requirement for coordinated activity across Divisions. It is also important to recognise that the interventions needed to address the cost-of-living crisis are varied; there is no single mitigating intervention that could address the multiple factors that contribute to whether a household can cope with insufficient income, high cost of essentials, and financial insecurity and debt.

The extent of the current crisis means that support continues to be needed on a greater scale than we have previously experienced, including for those who have not previously sought support before, and who may not have experience with our access channels, or be known to our services.

As such we need to target available support, reaching the maximum number of people with our available resources while working with our partners and stakeholders across different sectors.

The cost-of-living incident management team brings together different divisions, sectors, partners and organisations to consider all possible impacts of the crisis, facilitate a structured and coordinated response, and provide opportunity for partners to provide regular updates and discussions around our local response.

5.2.2. Website and information improvements for landlords

Lead Service: Combined. Status: Complete.

A project was undertaken with the Comms & Marketing Team to introduce a dedicated section on leicester.gov.uk that provides better and easier access to a range of resources for landlords and tenants.

We are now considering how best to promote the changes to members, landlords, and tenants.

Progress on ongoing workstreams:

5.2.3. Leicester Landlord Forum and landlord liaison

Lead Service: Homelessness, Prevention & Support. Status: Ongoing.

Forums were re-launched in July 2021 with a positive and collaborative focus. The forum was well received, and continued with a second successful forum in January 2022, albeit attendance lower than desired.

Another Forum is now being planned for late 2023 and some enhanced marketing efforts will be made to improve attendance.

Four Newsletters have been sent out since the beginning of the selective licensing scheme, updating landlords on the legislation and issues.

5.2.4. Implementation of Specialist PRS Housing Advice / Homelessness Prevention, and the Call Before You Serve service

Lead Service: Homelessness, Prevention & Support. Status: Ongoing.

This service was successfully launched on 4th August 2022 alongside the Call Before You Serve Offer.

The two teams work closely to ensure that tenant and landlord expectations are met and managed, whilst maintaining a degree of independence to ensure that the support given to each group remains impartial.

As a current snapshot, the team are managing 672 Tenant cases, and 38 ongoing landlord cases.

Initial KPIs show a 9% forecasted increase in Prevention of homelessness via sustainment, which is the primary goal of the initiatives to combat challenges in preventing homelessness through alternative accommodation.

Further comms and marketing are planned for end of 2023 to drive up the number of landlords using the service.

5.3. IMPROVING ENFORCEMENT, AND PROTECTION OF TENANTS' AND RESIDENTS' RIGHTS

Developments / additions to the Strategy:

Progress on ongoing workstreams:

5.3.1. Continuing to establish the new “Compliant Landlord Taskforce” Lead Service: Regulatory Services. Status: Under development

Progress has been made in formulating a wider strategy to coordinate operations and the compliant landlord taskforce, a partnership / multi-agency approach to dealing with rogue landlords. The Recruitment of a Senior EHO (Environmental Health Officer) would be part of this strategy however this workstream must be resourced and linked in across wider Housing Services to be effective. Work will continue on this and a further update will be available at the next juncture.

5.3.2. Damp and Mould Lead Service: Combined. Status: Ongoing

Following the Coroner verdict in Autumn 2022 that a child died as a direct result of living in a home that had damp and mould, Local Authorities have been tasked with looking at how they deal with complaints about damp and mould in their own housing stock and how complaints from tenants in the private rented sector are dealt with.

A corporate taskforce has been brought together from Housing, Regulatory Services, Public Health, EBS to develop an action plan and corporate response to concerns about damp and mould in domestic property.

KPIs for both Housing Repairs and Regulatory Services have been developed and will be reported quarterly.

5.4. IMPROVING ACCESS TO MARKET FOR HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Progress on ongoing workstreams:

5.4.1. We continue to monitor the positive impact of the improvements made to the scheme in July 2021, alongside the converse impact of rising rents and changing markets.

A review of the effectiveness of the schemes across 2021 and 2022 showed a gradual, increasing challenge in relation to helping service users with accessing the market in affordable way, as market rents continued to drift further from Local Housing Allowance rates.

Work was undertaken to assess the financial viability of increasing the upper operating limit of the bridging payments within the Platinum, Gold and Silver tiers of the scheme, and further improvements have been made to the scheme in September 2023 as a result.

If forecasts are met this will equate to a 62% increase in the number of properties secured each year.

Next steps identified are to ensure the new offer is communicated effectively to landlords and service users, in order to maximise use of the schemes in preventing and relieving homelessness.

5.5. IMPROVED INTELLIGENCE & MONITORING, AND JOINED-UP SERVICES

Progress on ongoing workstreams:

5.5.1. Workstreams within this priority will follow the creation of the new teams so that clarity is available on which systems are being used, at which point an analysis will be required to establish opportunities for sharing and integration.

Work has already been undertaken to create new joint working and information sharing meetings between key services, but further work is needed to join up intelligence and establish better joint working on shared issues.

6. Financial, legal and other implications

6.1. Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this update report. Whilst most activities are undertaken within existing resources, £195k has been earmarked from the Homelessness Prevention Grant to fund the creation of the team and the 'Call Before You Serve' service. The financial implications of new service developments are considered as and when they are put forward.

Homelessness is one of the largest cost pressures affecting local authorities, and one that is continuing to grow. The measures included within the PRS Strategy represent important steps in helping to manage and mitigate some aspects of these costs, but the bulk of the financial pressures will persist.

Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

6.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation) – x371435

6.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

Housing is responsible for 33% of carbon emissions in Leicester, with PRS housing often the worst performing tenure in terms of emissions. Following the city council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, and its aim to achieve carbon neutrality, addressing housing-related emissions is therefore a vital part of the council's work, and this is noted as an objective within the strategy. A number of the existing and proposed pieces of work outlined in this report will assist in this goal, including licensing work and the Operation EPC project to support landlords in improving the energy efficiency of properties

Wherever possible all projects should also look from their earliest stages for further opportunities to reduce emissions and enable analysis of their carbon impacts. This includes opportunities to provide support and advice to both tenants and landlords on measures such as improved insulation, efficient appliances and lighting, low carbon heating and renewable energy technologies. Additionally, many of the opportunities to reduce carbon emissions may also provide further co-benefits in terms of reduced fuel poverty and costs and improved health and wellbeing.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

6.4 Equalities Implications

When making decisions, the Council must comply with the public sector equality duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard, when carrying out their functions, to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

We need to be clear about any equalities implications of the course of action proposed. In doing so, we must consider the likely impact on those likely to be affected by the options in the report and, in particular, the proposed option; their protected characteristics; and (where negative impacts are anticipated) mitigating actions that can be taken to reduce or remove that negative impact.

Protected characteristics under the public sector equality duty are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This report provides a progress update on LCC's Private Rented Sector Strategy objectives, which focus on six high-level priorities with the aim of

improving housing standards with each being supported by identified workstreams. The work listed in this report and carried out under these priorities should lead to positive outcomes for people from across a range of protected characteristics.

We need to ensure equality considerations continue to be embedded throughout the ongoing work to deliver the strategy. Therefore, it is recommended that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are carried out as appropriate on identified areas within the workstreams, such as changes to policies/services/organisational change, to ensure any impacts are identified and addressed, and mitigating actions put in place.

The equality impact assessment is an iterative process that should be revisited throughout the decision-making process and updated to reflect any feedback/changes due to consultation/engagement as appropriate.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Office, 454 4175

7. Summary of appendices:

None

8. Is this a private report?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

Update only.

Immigration, Migration & Asylum update

Housing Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 30th October 2023

Lead director/officer: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Joanne Russell, Head of Service (Housing)
- Author contact details: joanne.russell@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: V0.1

1. Summary

- 1.1 Housing Scrutiny Commission will receive a presentation at the meeting on 30th October 2023 from the Assistant City Mayor for Education & Housing setting out a update in relation to immigration, migration & asylum.

2. Recommended actions

- 2.1 Housing Scrutiny Commission are invited to read and comment on the report and presentation.

3. Detailed report

- 3.1 There are a number of different schemes operating within the City of Leicester to support those who are fleeing violence or oppression in their home country.

These include:

- a) Asylum seekers
 - b) Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)
 - c) Ukraine Schemes
 - d) Afghan schemes (ARAP/ACRS)
 - e) Hong Kong BNO
 - f) Syrian (VPRS)
 - g) Community Support Group (CSG)
- 3.2 The presentation linked to this report will provide a brief update on a number of schemes including the numbers of arrivals and the impact that they have on local services.
- 3.3 There is a focus on the Asylum scheme as there have been recent developments that will have a notable impact on the City in the coming months.
- 3.4 It is important to note that while these schemes have an impact, the richness of culture and diversity that they bring to our vibrant City is something that we celebrate, are proud of and something that we are committed to continue supporting.

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

None

6.2 Legal implications

None

6.3 Equalities implications

None

Housing Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme 2023 – 2024

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
31 July 2023	Housing Overview (Chris Burgin)	The presentation be noted. Members of the commission invited to join this year's rough sleepers count. Discretionary licencing scheme and HMO's be considered on the work programme.	Date to be circulated later in the year to commission members regarding rough sleepers count. Private Rented Sector added to work programme to include update on the discretionary licencing scheme and HMO's.
	Who gets Social Housing (Justin Haywood)	The report be noted and a further update provided in six months.	Item added to work programme for update in January.
	Rent arrears report – Year-end report (Charlotte McGraw)	The report be noted. Further information to be provided to members of the commission in relation to outstanding repairs and the impact on rent payments.	Data shared with members of the commission.
	House Building & Acquisitions update (Simon Nicholls)	The report be noted. Further information to be provided to members of the commission in relation to the number of dwellings for proposed development at each identified site as well as timeframes for the completion of the site as Abbey Park Road.	Data shared with the commission. Further information on timescales to be shared when known.
	Disabled Facilities Grant / Housing Adaptation (Simon Nicholls)	The presentation be noted. Further work on the adaptions policy to be considered for the work programme.	Adaptations Policy added to work programme.

<p>19 September 2023</p>	<p>Homelessness Strategy Update (Caroline Carpendale / Justin Haywood)</p> <p>Damp & Mould (Sam Taylor / Alison Lea)</p> <p>Repairs, Gas & Voids Performance Report (Kevin Doyle / Sam Taylor)</p> <p>District Heating Metering update (Chris Burgin)</p>	<p>Figures on the current known position regarding homelessness in the city to be circulated to Members of the commission.</p> <p>Attention to be drawn to Members of the commission in relation to elements of communication within the Action Plan.</p> <p>Further information in relation to care leavers to be circulated to Members of the commission.</p> <p>Clarity to be sought on the decision-making process for strategies and the requirement for the Homelessness Strategy to go to Full Council.</p> <p>Online portal for private rented sector tenants to report damp and to be brought back to the commission when developed.</p> <p>Report to be noted.</p> <p>Options for Aikman Avenue flats to be shared with Members of the commission once identified.</p> <p>Costs to tenants and leaseholders for metre installation to be reviewed to ensure accurate for proposed timeframe.</p>	<p>Data shared with members of the commission.</p> <p>Actions contained within the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan shared with members of the commission.</p> <p>Data shared with members of the commission.</p> <p>Information shared with members of the commission.</p> <p>Added to the work programme.</p> <p>Noted that this may take some time. Has been added to the action tracker to be shared with members of the commission.</p> <p>Revised figures circulated to members of the commission.</p>
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Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
30 October 2023	<p>Retrofitting & Climate Emergency update (Simon Nicholls)</p> <p>Empty Homes update (Joanne Russell)</p> <p>PRS Strategy update (Justin Haywood and Sean Atterbury)</p> <p>Migration update (Joanne Russell)</p>		

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
28 November 2023	<p data-bbox="383 248 732 363">Housing Capital Programme update (Simon Nicholls)</p> <p data-bbox="383 459 732 608">ASB Service update & District Service performance (Gurjit Minhas)</p> <p data-bbox="383 703 732 818">Channel Shift – housing update (Charlotte McGraw)</p>		

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
9 January 2024	<p>Tenancy Support (Gurjit Minhas)</p> <p>HRA Budget (Chris Burgin)</p> <p>Who gets Social Housing? (Caroline Carpendale / Justin Haywood)</p> <p>Overcrowding Strategy update (Caroline Carpendale / Justin Haywood)</p>		

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
12 March 2024	<p>Environmental Budget update (Gurjit Minhas)</p> <p>Adaptations Strategy (Simon Nicholls)</p> <p>Homelessness Strategy Update (Caroline Carpendale / Justin Haywood)</p> <p>Income Collection Performance update (Charlotte McGraw)</p>		

Forward Plan Items (suggested)

Topic	Detail	Proposed Date
Housing allocations policy		
Response to the Housing Crisis in Leicester commission review		
Response to Examining the role and effectiveness of the proposal to establish a central housing Anti-Social Behaviour Team review	To be combined with ASB update.	27 November
Local Plan		
Damp & Mould – PRS Online Portal	Highlighted at meeting on 19 September that portal is in development and agreed to come back to the commission.	

