

ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 1st December, 2022

Present:-

Councillor Flood (Chair)

Councillors Dyke
Coy

Councillors Hollingworth
Snowdon

Emily Taylor, Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Amanda Clayton, Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Jane Davies, Service Director for Housing +
Vanessa Watson, Interim Head of Investment, Assets and Property
Operations +

Attended for Minute No. 30 +

28 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

29 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brittain.

30 **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING - DECENT HOMES STANDARDS
UPDATE**

The Service Director for Housing presented a report to the Committee on the three topics requested in the work programme.

1. Decent Homes Standards (DHS)
2. Turning around a vacant residential property (voids)
3. The impact of Covid-19 on the backlog of repairs

1. The Decent Homes Standards was a target set by the Government to ensure all homes met the standards of decency. It launched in 2004, with a set timetable that required the council to assess and

improve its housing stock. The DHS arose from the Government's Housing Green Paper – 'Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All' first published in 2002. It was expected that all stock would attain the appropriate standard by 2010.

Chesterfield Borough Council's target was for 100% of its homes to reach the required level. Currently 99.7% were considered decent. The council hoped to have the percentage back to 100% in 2023. Once the homes were up to the decency standards, the ambition was to excel beyond the legal requirements.

2. During the pandemic, the work on voids had to be put on hold, due to prioritisation of emergency repairs. 278 council homes were empty as of November 2022 and 52 of those were part of a wider refurbishment scheme. The Service Director for Housing explained that;
 - 13 were new voids where no work had commenced
 - 24 were complete and back with the Allocations Team ready for letting
 - 9 needed major structural works
 - 57 awaited electrical and gas works
 - 19 were complete and awaiting cleaning and gas recommissioning
 - 104 were in various stages of inspection with the Voids Team

The most recent annual report to tenants included the performance average for turning round a voids property of 94.7 days.

3. Between March 2020 and June 2021, the Responsive Repairs Team were only able to deliver emergency repairs due to measures put in place to help reduce the spread of Covid-19. By April 2021, the backlog on non-urgent repairs had reached 1,591; as of November 2022, this figure had reduced significantly to 556 awaiting repairs.

Committee members heard how the Housing Service hoped to engage with tenants in the New Year by starting a programme of home visits with tenants to find out more about people's experiences and identify where additional support may be needed.

Discussion:

Repairs;

- Housing Property Services (HPS) had looked to improve the advice given to tenants at the point of reporting repairs, with all call handlers provided with training on the most common repairs.
- A new housing contact list had been circulated to members, along with guidance on how to log complaints and service requests via the online system.
- There were no particular areas or trades where HPS had struggled to recruit new staff.
- The most common repair requests related to damp and mould, electrical faults, heating and hot water, leaks and blockages.

Decent homes

- Once the government had confirmed the new definition of decency, officers would include these in reports, explaining the implications for the HRA Capital Programme. The report would also include information about the causes of damp and mould in council homes, and planned improvements.
- HPS would consider more apprenticeships and training opportunities.
- HPS would consider member feedback on the following, to help people facing or at risk of fuel poverty:
 - Location of radiator valves
 - Location of thermostats
 - Installation of extractor fans where these are not present

Voids

- Officers would provide clearer information to customers regarding the repairs that would be completed after they have moved in, and timescales, to improve the overall customer experience.
- The process for mutual exchanges was to be reviewed.
- CBC's average relet time was 95 days in 2021/22, compared to 63 days in 2019/20 (pre-pandemic). A review of benchmarking data from other local authorities with similar-sized housing stock shows that median performance was 54 days (2021/22) and 33 days (2019/20). The improvements being made to the voids process would help to reduce the average relet times.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.
2. That a further update be brought to the committee as part of the 2023 work programme.

31 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Committee considered the Scrutiny recommendations monitoring schedule.

RESOLVED –

That the Scrutiny monitoring schedule be noted.

32 FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan for the four month period 1 December, 2023 to 31 March, 2023 was presented for information.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

33 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The 2022/23 Work Programme for the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee was reported for information.

RESOLVED –

That the work programme be noted and updated to include the decisions of the current meeting

34 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 22 September, 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.