

# Minutes

## Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 8 December 2022, 14:00

Council Chamber – South Kesteven  
House, St. Peter's Hill, Grantham.  
NG31 6PZ



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

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### Committee Members present

Councillor Sarah Trotter (Chairman)  
Councillor Barry Dobson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Richard Cleaver  
Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren  
Councillor Hilary Westropp  
Councillor Ray Wootten  
Councillor Virginia Moran

### Cabinet Members present

Councillor Adam Stokes (Deputy Leader of the Council)  
Councillor Robert Reid (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property)  
Councillor Linda Wootten (Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance & Licensing)

### Other Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter  
Councillor Phil Dilks

### Officers

Alan Robinson (Deputy Chief Executive)  
Nicola McCoy-Brown (Director of Growth and Culture)  
Craig Spence (Acting Director of Housing)  
Carol Drury (Community Engagement Manager)  
Debbie Nicholls (Armed Forces Officer)  
James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager)  
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

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## 27. Public Speaking

There were no comments from members of the public.

## 28. Apologies for absence

All Committee Members were present.

Councillor Virginia Moran was filling the Alliance SK Vacancy.

## 29. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

## 30. Minutes from the meeting held on 5 October 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2022 were proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** as a correct record.

One Member raised that within the minutes, it stated that a discussion around affordable housing would take place, it was queried as to whether this took place and what had been discussed.

## 31. Updates from the previous meeting

The Committee noted the actions agreed at the meeting held on 5 October 2022.

Further clarification was sought around the status of the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme following the six-month period of Ukrainian families staying in the District. It was queried as to whether they had indefinite leave to remain in the UK. Numbers of families that had been re-housed was also questioned.

The Acting Director of Housing assured the Committee that additional numbers would be forthcoming to the Committee, following the meeting.

It was confirmed that hosting arrangements were continuing. The Council had completed 171 inspections on properties within the District. South Kesteven also remained the largest host District within Lincolnshire and the lowest number of breakdowns between hosts and Ukrainian families.

**ACTION: For the Acting Director of Housing to provide further information and numbers on the status of Ukrainian families living in the District following the six-month period.**

One Member requested an update from the Housing Working Group.

The Acting Director of Housing noted that another meeting had taken place and an update would be included alongside the Regulatory Compliance item.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property clarified that following the closure of Stoke Rochford for a week, it was re-opened and the current contract for families residing at Stoke Rochford was a twelve-month period.

One Member raised a query regarding the funding after the six-month period had ended and whether the funding was still available. Clarification was sought over the types of families staying at Stoke Rochford. It was confirmed the families residing at Stoke Rochford were refugees and Albanian families.

The Acting Director of Housing confirmed that hosting arrangements were still being funded through the Government and the Council were awaiting clarification on the timescale of the funding to end. The Council were continuing to monitor the host and family tensions on a weekly basis and a funded worker was working with the families.

The Chairman highlighted that a 'Celebrate the Nations' had taken place where many Ukrainian families attended.

Following a previous comment made, a Member queried the hosting of Ukrainians in Skegness.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property clarified that the hosting of Ukrainians in Skegness had been in the media where a question was raised on the impact on Skegness and surrounding area on hotels provisions for other people and to seek an assurance that any more provision would be made at present due to the infrastructure being stretched to capacity.

A Member highlighted that a briefing had been held at Lincolnshire County Council regarding Ukrainian families. It was noted that Ukrainian families were not staying at Stoke Rochford and was being used for refugee families. This was a separate scheme to households hosting Ukrainian families. The Government had not yet announced that the six months stay period would be formally extended, however there was expectation that it would be. It had not yet been decided as to whether the allowance figure would be increased or stay the same. The announcement was expected by mid-December 2022.

### **32. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service**

There were none.

One Member expressed concern as to whether there were any updates regarding the Ground Maintenance contract and the depot which affected the HRA.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property informed the Committee on items discussed at the Housing Member workshop:

- Members enquires
- Compliance update
- Verbal update on Mould – housing situations
- Voids and number of void turnarounds
- Integrated Housing Management System
- Earlesfield update (weekly update to all Members)
- Grounds Maintenance Contract, in regard to HRA – Consultation going out to tenants
- Depot

The Deputy Leader of the Council highlighted that the agenda item was present on all Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and updates would be provided when necessary.

One Member requested that the consultation that had been sent out to tenants be given to Members.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property confirmed that the consultation questions would be published on Skyline, however, they would be circulated to Committee Members via email.

**ACTION: For the Acting Director of Housing to circulate the consultation questions on Grounds Maintenance provided to tenants to Members.**

### **33. Regulatory Compliance**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property presented the progress report.

The Committee had now received nine update reports since March 2021 that confirmed the Regulatory Notice served on the Council and provided an outline of the work that officers would continue to complete to ensure progress through a programme of improvement. The Committee determined that it wished to receive update reports on progress at each of its meetings to ensure that Members had oversight of broad progress around the key areas of activity and could engage with Officers and scrutinise work where required. It identified the following core headings as a means of updating Members and would identify the following information to assist this process. In addition, at the meeting on 01 July 2021, Committee requested sight of the Improvement Plan; the latest version was appended to this report.

#### **Updating Tenants and Members:**

As reported to the Committee's meeting in June 2022, a full tenant consultation exercise was undertaken – "The Big Listen". This involved several questions on both the current experience of tenants in terms of the services the Council offered as a landlord and what they would like to see prioritised in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, which required a complete review in 2022/23. The questions were based on the Regulator of Social Housing's proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures and the initial report was provided to Committee in the meeting on 23 June 2022.

Good practice suggested a comprehensive Stock Condition survey should be completed every 5 years, usually by undertaking a survey of 20% of the stock each year. The Survey has now concluded, and analysis of the findings continued. The Council continued to utilise its Rant and Rave feedback system, seeking real time feedback from tenants following responsive repairs and continued to see overall satisfaction of 4.5 out of 5, demonstrating sustained high satisfaction at the point

where repairs are undertaken. An all Councillor briefing on Housing was delivered in November, providing an update on the work ongoing across the teams to provide an understanding of the current priorities, projects and pressures that the team were currently dealing with.

### **Regular Meetings with the Regulator:**

Monthly meetings between the Chief Executive, Acting of Housing and the Regulator's Officers took place as scheduled. Auditors had started their review recently alongside progress that had been significant right across the landlord health and safety compliance function with the intention that the Audit would endorse compliance. An HSE report on the Riverside complex had been considered and findings concluded too. The relationship with the Regulator was positive, with the Regulator acknowledging that the Council was moving to a position to seek removal of the Notice that was formally served in February 2021.

### **Leadership Compliance Meetings:**

Chaired by Cabinet Member for Housing and Property and attended by the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Acting Director of Housing, these meetings were a continued feature of the more detailed compliance review process being undertaken. Members of this group ensured specific responses to the changing compliance review process and managed tenant and communication responses to actions associated with key service and regulatory responses such as agreeing the scope and nature of key issues to be covered by the next SKYline magazine publication, due in December 2022.

### **Regular Reports to Committees and Cabinet:**

Members were invited to comment on this report content and confirm their views and observations relating to the detail contained within this report. These were to be further determined through work with the Regulator, the adjusted Improvement Plan and consideration of key outputs by Members, Leadership Compliance meetings, and All Member briefing sessions as arranged.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:

- When was the Stock Condition Survey completed and when were the findings to be reported to scrutiny committees, particularly as the results were to inform the budget for next year's Capital Programme?
- That not all Members were familiar with the 'Rant and Rave' consultation process for tenant feedback.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property confirmed that the findings of the Stock Condition Survey were in preparation for the budget and a paper was to be heard at the upcoming Cabinet meeting.

The Acting Director for Housing added that the Stock Condition Survey was undertaken from June 2021 and concluded in April 2022. 78% of stock was completed and the data obtained was used to inform the budget decisions going forward.

The 'Rant and Rave' process was an opportunity for tenants to provide feedback upon completion of repairs or the start of a tenancy. Tenants were generally satisfied but improvements to the time taken to complete repairs were underway.

The Chairman highlighted that a demonstration of the new Housing Management System was due to be brought to the next Committee meeting.

A query was raised regarding the percentage of people who had received a repair or moved into a property completed the feedback forms.

It was confirmed that 738 feedback responses had been received since the end of May 2022, equating to between 8-10% of all interactions.

Members and Officers expressed their disappointment of only 8-10% of residents interacting via feedback forms. It was further noted that the 'Big Listen Survey' had received a 29.7% interaction rate from residents.

'Rant and Rave' had been publicised via Skyline and had been communicated through the Tenants Liaison Group.

A query was raised regarding gas compliance inspections and the number of residents required to attend court and whether any warrants had been issued.

The Acting Director of Housing highlighted that court sessions take place monthly, where 20 cases would be taken per month. All warrants granted in court were then executed. At the end of November 2022, there were 24 non-compliant properties which had reduced from 40 non-compliant properties.

Clarification was sought on whether Officers were unable to gain full entry to certain properties and whether any properties were seen to be sub-let.

It was clarified that there were no properties that were seen to be sub-let. A core of the Council's tenant group were more reluctant than others regarding allowing access. Therefore, the Council were regularly reinforcing the importance for tenants to access Skyline to increase tenant interaction.

A further query was raised on whether the Council were still engaging with the sheltered housing accommodation residents.

The sheltered housing workshops were still taking place once a month across the District. By February 2023, it was hoped that the Council had visited every sheltered housing complex.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property noted that the contract relating to social landlord services would be heard at the next Cabinet meeting on 13 December 2022.

Queries were raised regarding 'Rant and Rave':

- Whether only feedback was received through 'Rant and Rave'.
- Whether negative feedback was coming from residents awaiting works in their home or had not received a response.
- The timeframe from a complaint being received to the time it takes to repair was queried.

The Acting Director of Housing highlighted that the feedback was purely a transactional satisfaction mechanism, and the tenant would provide feedback following undergoing works in their Council property.

It was confirmed that the complaints procedure coincided with the customer feedback policy. There had been a backlog on low level, non-urgent repairs, however, emergency repairs were attended to within a 48-hour period. The Council's repair team were expediting works on weekends to complete the repairs in a timely manner. The reasoning of most complaints was not due to timescales, they were mostly related to the dissatisfaction of a 4-5 week wait for a repair to be completed.

One Member sought further clarification on the analysis of the stock condition survey and the reasoning behind jobs going out to tender as a result of what had been identified. It was suggested that the Committee receive a full report on findings of the stock condition survey and what actions were due to be taken.

The following questions were raised in relation to the actions outlined in the appendices:

- Why the action relating to the lack of strategy and policy framework had previously been rated amber and no improvement could be seen.
- Concern over the Draft Repairs Policy not being taken to Cabinet until April 2023, and whether this would affect the Council being taken out of special measures.
- A timescale of when Housing would be taken out of special measures.

In response to the above questions, the Acting Director of Housing outlined that the Council were refreshing a high number of policy frameworks at present. Progress was ongoing regarding repairs in coherence with the draft repairs policy, which would be completed alongside the new housing management system. It was confirmed that external auditors had completed work around the housing special measures within the last few days, however, the turnaround for the audit was 4-6 weeks. Upon receipt of the outcome of the audit, the regulator would assess as the figures provided to ensure they were correct, which could then see the notice lifted. It was hoped that the audit be complete before the end of January 2023.

The Acting Director of Housing reassured the Committee that data loaded from the stock condition survey coincided with a KPI that was due to be reviewed in another report. The report identified the 'Decent Home Standard' at 94.49% that had been taken directly from the stock condition survey from the Councils Apex asset management system. An update would be forthcoming regarding future investment requirements in line with the Council's HRA Business plan.

One Member raised concern on whether the timescale was realistic to receive the audit response and achieve regulator sign off for regulatory notice in January 2023.

It was confirmed that at the time of the last reporting of regulatory compliance, the Council had sent expressions of interest to four audit companies, which had to be procured correctly, sign off from procurement was completed at the end of November 2022. The sign off from the regulator would depend on the timings of their next board meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property clarified that the contract for the audit went through procurement. The appointed audit company was under contractual arrangements that they would deliver by the end of January 2023. Upon success of the audit, the regulator had provided a benchmark to complete the sign off in a timely fashion which had been contractually provided.

One Member queried whether the Council had to pay court costs were for non-compliant gas safety, if so, how much these costs were and whether the costs could be recovered.

At the previous meeting, it was suggested that local ward Members visit non-complaint gas safety properties for Members to highlight the importance of gas safety checks. It was queried as to whether this had taken place.

Clarification was sought on the breakdown of the £6.2 million available for fire doors, windows, and other aspects on 6000 Council properties, which equated to £1000 per property. Concern was raised that £1000 per property seemed extreme.

The Acting Director of Housing noted that the recently adopted recharge policy outlined the fact that court costs would be recharged to the tenant in relation to any costs incurred by the Council.

The capital program breakdown figure had been similar to previous capital program figures each year regarding capital improvements. Each of the Council's contractors were procured independently for each stream of work (roofing, doors windows or heating systems).

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property notified the Committee that the code of housing members safety and attending non-compliant properties had been considered around not entering a property in difficult circumstances and not attending a property alone. This initiative had been overtaken due to the last



remaining gas compliant failures diminishing considerably, therefore, it did not seem necessary.

One Member suggested that the Committee voted on the recommendations and requested opportunity to scrutinise the proposals prior to them being heard at Cabinet, following the discussions around the stock condition survey and capital improvement costs.

The Acting Director of Housing confirmed that the £6.2 million in question was part of the overall budget setting process for 2023, therefore would be going through full scrutiny, Cabinet and Full Council.

#### **AGREED:**

##### **That Committee:**

- 1. Noted the latest compliance position following the ongoing meetings with the Regulator of Social Housing.**
- 2. Received a further update report at its next scheduled meeting**

#### **34. Armed Forces - Advocacy and Community Engagement**

The Community Engagement Manager presented the report providing an update on the new Armed Forces Act and the Armed Forces Covenant, implications for South Kesteven District Council and aspirations under the Council's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.

The Chairman informed the Committee that on 8 December 2022, the last surviving Dambuster, Johnny Johnson, had sadly passed away at the age of 101.

It was highlighted the recently released census figure revealed that more than 7000 military veterans reside in the District.

The Armed Forces Officer supported the report with a Powerpoint presentation which provided photographs of recent events that had taken place throughout the year.

Committee Members thanked all Officers and Members involved in the hard work around Armed Forces.

Members raised the following points in relation to Armed Forces in South Kesteven:

- That May 2023 will see the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'Dambusters raid'. It was hoped that authorities in Lincolnshire would take part in the celebration.
- Stamford Welland Academy was one of the few schools in the country that had a combined cadet force.
- South Kesteven was the landlord to the Air Cadets in Stamford.

The Armed Forces Officer highlighted the 'Dambusters raid' was coordinated in Grantham at St Vincent's Hall in 1943. Pre-covid, a series of events were organised, and it was hoped a similar event could take place for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'Dambusters raid'.

A query was raised on whether the Warwickshire County Council e-learning training module was due to be rolled out to Councillors also.

It was confirmed the training module was via Warwickshire County Council due to the benefit of networking relationships and collections of good ideas.

An example was requested on what a local business had done to support the Armed Forces.

The Armed Forces Officer documented Grantham had two Gold Award businesses (Recruit Me and TMS). These businesses were being used to encourage other businesses to become involved with the employer recognition scheme and sign up, as part of the action plan for 2023.

One Member raised concern regarding the mental health of former servants residing in South Kesteven and whether the Council offered any support to them. The number of ex-military rough sleepers within the District was queried and whether any support was provided for them. It was further questioned whether jobs would be protected if reservists were called up, as it was believed this was part of legislation.

The Armed Forces Act followed three principles:

- Housing
- Education
- Health/Mental health

The Armed Forces Officer had been involved with mental health groups and peer support breakfast clubs for ex-military individuals. It was highlighted that doctors had been encouraged to sign up to the GP veteran accreditation scheme which allowed GP's to be aware of health issues as a result of military service with extra training available for practice staff.

One Member invited all present to the British Legion Branch in February where the National Chairman of the Goldfish Club was due to provide a talk on the club set up in World War II for survivors saved by a dinghy. The Member requested the event was publicised.

It was confirmed there was a specific resource within the NHS to tackle mental health called 'Op Courage'.

It was noted the majority of the events had taken place in Grantham.

One Member highlighted that within the report, an update on the Lincolnshire Defence and Security Network was an 'Arms Fair' and this did not include military history.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED**:

**That Members of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- 1. Recommend to the Chief Executive consideration is given to prioritise the approved staff training budgets to include mandating the Armed Forces e-learning module**
- 2. Endorse the suggested approach for the Council's Economic Development Service to assist in promoting the Greater Lincolnshire Defence and Security Network to appropriate defence-related South Kesteven businesses**
- 3. Support suggesting to the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee that recognition of South Kesteven's rich military history is included in the Council's emerging Visitor Economy Strategy**

**35. Energy Efficiency - Grant Funding**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property presented the report which provided an insight into the energy efficiency measures being delivered to Council tenants. The measures were being delivered through two grant funds and are key for assisting residents in relation to increasing utility costs.

The Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 was match funded for improvements of properties over two years and the Council had enabled a drawdown of £770, 800 at present. The Council had delivered improvements to 164 properties, which had been delivered across two main heating types (electric storage heating - 78 installations and air source heat pumps – 86 installations).

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding was a bid of over £7 million, which had been submitted. The grant element equalling £3.4 million, if successful energy efficiency works would be delivered on 333 properties.

The timeline from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy would notify the Council by March 2023, if the bid was successful. A further update would be brought back to the Committee when more information was available.

A query was raised on whether the houses fitted with air source heat pumps were proving to be economical to maintain and run.

The Acting Director of Housing confirmed that the air source heat pumps were more efficient regarding the energy they consume to provide heat into the property. A

user guide had been shared with tenants due to the air source heat pumps working differently to storage heaters and gas fired central heating systems.

It was hoped that the air source heat pumps would be cheaper and more efficient to run than the systems that had been removed.

One Member raised queries in relation to energy efficiency ratings:

- Whether the upgrading of 330 properties were ratings informed by the stock condition survey.
- How the Council could derive costs from the level of detail of upgrades on properties.
- Whether energy efficiency rating B could be achieved, or whether C (as set out in exempt appendix) was the highest rating achievable.

The Acting Director of Housing responded to the above questions regarding EPC ratings:

- That all properties identified had an EPC completed alongside the stock condition surveys over the past 12-18 months.
- E-on energy were involved in the bid process and each property identified had bespoke packages identified.
- The goal rating of C was due to a regulation in the near future where the Council would require all properties to become a rating of C before they could be re-let once void.
- There were cost floors within the bidding system which prevented the Council to spend more than £18,000 per property in energy efficiency improvements.

Further clarification was sought on the properties that had experienced heating upgrades:

- Whether the heating was more expensive prior to the upgrades.
- Whether the previous means of heating was coal or solid fuel heating.
- Whether the results and performance of the upgrades and systems would be reviewed on a long-term basis through surveys.
- Whether housing stock report would include insulation of properties on the Council's housing stock.

The Acting Director of Housing confirmed that the replacements completed under the LAD2 funding was the installation of electric storage heaters, which were from off-grid gas properties. The air source heat pumps used for upgrades tended to be solid fuel installations.

As part of the stock condition survey, all current insulation mechanisms within properties were quantified. A full EPC was also undertaken on all of the Council's properties when the stock condition was completed meaning any additional insulation requirements could be easily identified.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property agreed that a review of the performance of air source heat pumps installed in Council properties would be beneficial.

**ACTION: For a review on the performance of air source heat pumps to take place in the near future.**

*(The Chairman adjourned the meeting for 5 minutes)*

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED:**

**That the Committee:**

1. **Noted the final position with regard to the delivery through the Local Authority Delivery scheme (LAD2) grant funding within the Council's social housing properties.**
2. **Noted the grant funding submission to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) to further support delivery of energy efficiency measures for the next two years.**

### **36. Mid-term performance indicators**

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report.

The South Kesteven Corporate Plan 2020-23 was approved by Council on 1 October 2020. It was agreed by Council that actions, key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets were to be developed by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee.

The report provided an update on performance to the mid-year point of the 2022/23 financial year and incorporated the changes recommended by the last KPI review to 3 outline areas of the council's performance which were successful and to advise where challenges may lay.

The report summary was as follows:

8 of the actions were rated Green. These were actions above target as planned.

2 actions were rated as Amber. These are those off target by less than 10% or where milestone achievement is delayed but with resolution in place to be achieved within a reasonable timeframe.

2 actions were rated Red. These are those falling significantly below target or overdue with no specific resolution date planned.

One Member raised a query on the action relating to CCTV and number of incidents where offenders were arrested as the percentage seemed low. It was queried how many arrests CCTV resulted in prosecution.

**ACTION: For the Assistant Director for Operations and Public Protection to provide statistics around the number of arrests that resulted in prosecutions within the District.**

One Member had previously attended the meeting of Bourne, Stamford and Deeping Neighbourhood Policing priorities, where SKDC CCTV colleagues were praised for their contribution into assisting Police with target criminals and suspected crime.

One Member made the following comments around the housing actions:

- Why the affordable housing target was rated green, when the target had not been met.
- That the action relating to 'housing that meets the needs of all residents' had not met the target of building 650 properties and 244 properties had been built. It was queried as to whether any measures were in place to include background information on latest housing supply.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property notified the Committee that planning permission criteria made the delivery of affordable housing schemes more difficult.

Concern was raised over the action rated red regarding proportion of prevention cases successfully resolved of homelessness. It was suggested that a percentage only measure should be reported and related to the size of the population in question.

The Acting Director of Housing highlighted that there were seasonal factors to the action regarding homelessness. 39.06% of prevention cases resolved was the current percentage achieved and the 50% target was a stretched target and could not easily be reached. It was confirmed that figures would be included in future commentary to assist in the understanding of the percentages.

One Member raised concern over the Council the green rated action which outlined the Council embracing the 'National mental health challenge' given the recent decision on the Deepings Leisure Centre which had caused mental distress of the residents.

It was queried as to whether action 9 'making best use of different funding sources to support the voluntary and cultural sector within the district' would include leisure and whether the Council would support any community applications for funding to reopen Deepings Leisure Centre without being directly involved.

The Director of Growth and Culture confirmed that she would provide an update to the Member in question following the meeting.

**ACTION: For the Director of Growth and Culture to provide an update to the Member in question on whether the Council would support any community applications for funding to reopen Deepings Leisure Centre without being directly involved.**

One Member queried as to whether any progress had been made on the Spittlegate Heath garden village and the time frame of work commencing.

It was further queried as to how many houses had been built since 2019.

Clarification was pursued over Larch Close and Uplands Drive as the report stated that planning permission was being sought and that public consultation was being launched in Autumn.

The Acting Director of Housing confirmed that minor amendments were being made to plans for Larch Close before permissions were submitted for planning permission. The public consultation for Uplands Drive was being launched in Autumn 2023.

The Director of Growth and Culture highlighted that the Spittlegate Heath garden village had made good progress with the respective developers and the Planning Committee had previously received an update on the Council's land supply.

It was queried as to whether there was any tangible evidence of progress being made on the projects. It was confirmed that footings had not yet been laid on the Spittlegate Heath garden village at present.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property confirmed that 14 properties were delivered in 2021, 42 properties in 2022 and 51 properties were due to be delivered in 2023. The Council had been using investment funds that had gone into reserves to fund programmes that had been delivered.

It was suggested that the Council spends reserves as a fundamental deposit on securing a larger amount of money by way of loan deposit for a larger delivery. Borrowing money from the Housing Revenue Account stock could assist in delivering more homes. Thoughts from the Committee were welcomed to drive the initiative forward.

The Deputy Leader of the Council confirmed that financial modelling would need to be undertaken prior to any financial suggestion being brought forward.

Further clarification was sought on the amount of money in the HRA account, which had previously been earmarked for new houses, and whether it would be used for new houses.

It was clarified that the Council could use some reserves funding as a deposit and to borrow money on the capital investment to provide a larger yield.

The Deputy Leader of the Council noted that the Council were reluctant to go ahead with new builds until the stock condition survey was completed, due to a possible risk of overstretching finances.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property informed the Committee that investment could be spent over the next 3 years in delivering improvements to the Council's current stock. A workshop was welcomed to be created to further discuss this topic.

**AGREED:**

- 1. Note the contents of the 2022/23 Mid-Year performance report.**
- 2. Members to consider if any concerns highlighted by the report require additional investigation to be added to the work programme.**

**37. Progress report on Choice-based lettings in line with the Housing Allocation Policy**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property presented the report which provided an update on the choice-based lettings system and progress since the Committee and Cabinet adoption of the housing allocation policy. At present, there were 1500 live applications and for the previous financial year, only 327 properties in the Council's own stock were re-let and 189 from other social housing providers across the District.

The choice-based lettings scheme would assist in enabling the delivery of the best possible service for residents who had applications and would widen the choice and access in being able to bid for properties.

The Council had undertaken a compliant procurement process and were submitting the contract award for consideration at the next Cabinet meeting, if approved, the system would go live in the second quarter of 2023.

It was clarified that the system would be a standalone choice-based letting system and would not coincide with the integrated housing management system.

Concern was raised in relation to the implementation of the choice-based lettings system and the fact that non-urgent cases would need to re-register with the new system. It was queried as to whether a data conversion could take place from the old system to the new system. It was suggested that the Council contacts tenants that have already registered to ensure they would be put onto the new system.

The Acting Director of Housing confirmed that the re-registration process would not include contacting tenants that were already registered and asking for their details. The re-registration would include verifying the current information held to ensure that it was correct, which could be completed online, in person or over the phone.



Concern was raised over the scrutiny process of the report, where a further report would be taken to Cabinet.

**AGREED:**

- 1. That the Committee notes the latest progress of the choice-based lettings process and that full procurement procedures have been followed.**
- 2. The Committee recommends to Cabinet the procurement of the ChoiceBased Lettings system to meet the requirements of our Housing Allocations Policy.**

**38. Work Programme 2022-2023**

The Committee noted the Work Programme 2022 – 2023.

One Member queried as to whether a crime and disorder meeting date had been put into place.

It was requested that the following items be included for consideration at a future Committee meeting:

- Crime and disorder
- Effectiveness of affordable housing
- Voids
- Update on mould management

The Chairman highlighted that she had been in regular contact with the new policing team and would raise the idea of arranging a crime and disorder meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property confirmed that a written response would be provided regarding effectiveness of affordable housing.

**ACTION: For the Acting Director of Housing to provide a written response on effectiveness of affordable housing.**

**ACTION: For the Acting Director of Housing to provide a written response on voids.**

**39. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent**

There was no other business.

**40. Close of Meeting**

The Chairman closed the meeting at 16:45.

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