

Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Thursday, 14 November 2024,
2.00 pm

Committee Members present

Councillor Lee Steptoe (Chairman)
Councillor Zoe Lane (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Matthew Bailey
Councillor Emma Baker
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Habibur Rahman
Councillor Paul Wood

Other Members present

Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Virginia Moran

Cabinet Members

Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Planning

Officers

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing and Projects
Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) , Monitoring Officer
Sarah McQueen, Head of Housing
Mark Rogers, Head of Technical Services (Housing)
Phil Swinton, Health and Safety Compliance Officer
Charles James, Policy Officer
Suniel Pillai, New Build Project Officer
Hannah Rowe, Performance Analyst
Lucy Bonshor, Democratic Officer

36. Public Speaking

The Chairman informed the Committee that there were three public speakers for the meeting. Each public speaker was advised that they could ask one question plus one supplementary question.

Karen Oliver, Helping Hands was the first to speak and was reminded that although a number of questions had been submitted, only one question plus a supplementary question could be asked.

Karen Oliver stated that at the last meeting the Cabinet Member for Housing had stated that homeless people could charge their phones at MacDonalds or Wetherspoons, she had approached these businesses and was told this was not correct, she also stated that the number of rough sleepers came from the Passage and Beehive, again this was not correct as this information was not asked for. Also, GDPR statements were not taken from Members of the public so this information could be given out. Karen Oliver asked where was the Council getting its data from and referred to the table at 3.7 of the report which gave figures on rough sleepers from 2017 to 2023 and did not include 2024, where were the figures from 2024 as her figures were treble of those from last year, where is the data coming from?

The Cabinet Member for Housing clarified which question she should answer and it was confirmed the one about where the data was coming from. The Cabinet Member asked the Head of Housing to respond. The data that was presented in the report is the Annual Rough Sleeper count which was a national account that all local authorities had to abide by. It was conducted in the winter of every year, the date set for this year was 21 November 2024 which had not taken place yet so the figure for 2024 was not yet available.

Karen Oliver stated that the Officer had still not stated where the data actually came from. On that particular day did people from the Council carry out the count or people from another agency, where was the Council getting the data from.

As part of the Annual Rough Sleeper Count, the Council were given guidance on how the data was gathered, and partner agencies were used. There are different approaches that each Council can take, there was a count based approach or an estimate based approach plus a rough sleeper count. The Council did an estimate based approach, so that people were not out counting on the street on 21 November, the reason the Council did this was because we have outreach services that were out all throughout the year, so the Council was confident in the fact that information could be gathered to enable the Council to predict who will be out on that particular evening. More information could be found on the website Homeless Link which provided guidance that the Council had to follow as a district authority.

The next public speaker was Jackie McCullion who asked:

'How do the Council support those who are street homeless but DO NOT meet priority needs. I'm thinking about those individuals who experience a significant and immediate decline in their personal well-being, for example there is a safeguarding concern or possible suicide situation and they find themselves on the street.

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded. If a client presented as street homeless, a homelessness application was completed which allows the Council to determine the duties it owes to that person. If someone was deemed to not fulfil the criteria of priority need, as defined in the homelessness legislation, this just means that we do not have a duty to provide short term accommodation, but we still work

with that person to help them with their housing situation and to hopefully source longer-term accommodation.

The Council provide advice and support and create a bespoke personal housing plan with the aim of supporting them to source accommodation or to explore short-term options such as lodging with family until a longer term option is available. The Council signpost clients to our support agencies such as the Change4Lincs team because they can provide intensive support such as benefit maximization and landlord incentive schemes to help people into private rental accommodation. The Council don't have any hostel accommodation available in South Kesteven unfortunately, but we do have an organisation called NACRO. NACRO provides supported accommodation, they have 25 units in Grantham and the Council holds full nomination rights into that scheme. The Council also explores partnership working arrangements with local organisations who provide shared accommodation for single people. The Council works closely with our partner Living Concepts who can often offer their vacancies to the Council before they go on the open market.

Homelessness is an incredibly complex issue and the fact that there is not enough social housing to meet the ever growing demand, is a national picture and is not unique to South Kesteven, which is why the Council must follow legislation to ensure that social housing is only allocated to those in most need and the Council simply cannot provide accommodation placements to everybody who comes to us regardless of where they come from.

The Council continues to explore new ways to increase our housing provision in South Kesteven in order to better meet the demand. Most recently a bid was put in on a property with the intention of converting it to four bedsits and a shared kitchen to use as emergency accommodation for homeless people but unfortunately the Council were not successful in their bid. The Cabinet Member for Housing indicated that if anyone became aware of large properties to send the information in.

There was no supplementary question.

The Chairman asked the third public speaker, Nicole Bavister for her question but it was stated that the Chairman had used his discretion and the question should be generic rather than personal as it was a public meeting. The original plan was to discuss mine and my father's current situation with being homeless, but now we have been housed with Concepts but the main aim of my question was to ask about what is being done about the mistreatment and misconduct regarding people with mental health issues trying to get housed. I personally suffer with schizophrenia, sorry if that's too much, but I don't mind talking about it, I am very open about it. I really feel like I was alienated by the Council going through the system and we weren't seen as high priority, so I was just wondering why that might be.

The Chairman stated that he was trying to balance letting Ms Bavister have a fair say with the fact that the question should not be personalized. On Ms Bavisters

behalf the Chairman asked “What is done by the Council to help vulnerable people who are homeless?”

The Cabinet Member for Housing thanked Nicole for attending the meeting. In order to not make the situation or anybody in a similar situation more public, because its personal information and this is a public meeting. The Cabinet Member for Housing asked if Ms Bavister could wait until the end of the meeting to talk about her particular situation. The Chairman asked if an appointment could be made with Councillor Moran and a senior officer at a time convenient to Nicole Bavister. However, it was noted that a Senior Homelessness Officer was in the chamber and it was indicated that a meeting could take place immediately outside the meeting.

The Head of Housing gave a response to the question “What does the Council do to support vulnerable people who were homeless”. As was alluded to in Councillor Moran’s answer to the previous question. When we have approaches from homeless people, we do have to abide by what is set in legislation in regards to assessing what we deem as someone being classed as priority need under that legislation. It is a strict legislation and the demand for social housing and the demand for the Council’s services was high so we have to apply that legislation. When we have a homelessness application, we make decisions during the process based on the evidence that’s provided. You are able when a decision has been made to request a review of any decision, if you feel that that decision is not correct. It was indicated that this would be discussed in more detail when Ms Bavister’s specific case was discussed outside the meeting.

Ms Bavister appreciated the facts that had been set out and thanked the Chairman for his summarising of the question.

A meeting with a Senior Homelessness Officer, Nicole Bavister and the Head of Housing then took place outside the meeting.

One Member raised a question in respect of Karen Oliver who had attended the last meeting of the Committee. He stated that he thought there seemed to be a problem with meeting with Helping Hands and he wanted assurance that meetings were taking place. The Cabinet Member for Housing stated that they had tried to interact with them but it was difficult, they had tried, emails were received regularly from them.

The Member wanted to continue but the Chairman stated that this was the Public Speaking element of the agenda and there would be an opportunity later in the meeting for the Member to make comment. The Director of Housing and Projects referred the Member to an email that Members had been sent on the issue.

37. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Penny Milnes.

38. Disclosure of Interest

The Chairman asked if any Member had any interest to declare.

One Member referred to the last two meetings where he had asked for a report on voids. The Chairman indicated that this was not the appropriate time to raise the issue, however the Member then raised a point of order and referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Rules, paragraph 4.2 where Members were entitled to give notice to have an item included on the agenda.

The Member stated that he had specifically asked at the last two meetings of the Committee for a report on voids which he had not got and he felt that this breached the Constitution. The Chairman stated that he had received advice from the Monitoring Officer that no breaches had occurred. The Member requested that a full report on voids came to the next meeting of the Committee. The report to include the type of voids, the reasons for the delays, the reasons that the Council was missing the targets, what is proposed and an action plan he asked for the item under 4.2 of the Constitution.

The Member indicated that he was not happy that the item had not been included after specifically asking for voids to be included on the work programme, which the Chairman had previously agreed too, he stated that he had no confidence in the Chairman and he left the meeting and did not return.

(14:20 Councillor Paul Wood left the meeting and did not return)

The Director of Housing and Projects stated that she had asked on two separate occasions what the Member would like to see in the void report but had not received a response. Now that the information had been received and a clear direction indicated a report could be produced. The Director of Housing and Projects reminded the Committee that a comprehensive report on voids had been before the Committee in March 2024. The report had detailed the voids process and the performance of the voids at the time. The only part missing was the current performance and that was detailed within the report on the KPI's later in the agenda.

The Chairman again asked if there were any interests to declare and reminded Members that interests could be declared at any time during the meeting.

39. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2024

The Chairman asked the Committee if they had any comments in respect of the accuracy of the minutes. One Member indicated that in reference to the Riverside item Members noted the findings of the feasibility study but they also supported the proposed enhancement and rectification works to improve the heating system at the Riverside Housing complex which he highlighted had not been included in the minutes. It was indicated that the minutes would be amended to reflect this.

The Director of Housing and Projects gave a brief update on the heating works at the Riverside Housing complex in Grantham. Work had commenced on Monday with a temporary boiler being installed to ensure all residents had heating throughout the duration of the works.

The primary system would be flushed at the same time as new heat exchanges and pipework was installed together with a new management system. The second part of the project would be to flush the secondary part of the system which would take a longer period of time due to the addition of additives.

The current cost of the works to replace the six boilers, the new management system, the flushing of the primary system, the replacement of pipe works and the heat exchanges was £100,000. At the last committee it had been estimated at £160,000. The Director of Housing and projects then referred to the emersion heaters and stated that there were six that needed to be wired, however, there were still three properties that the Council was struggling to gain access to but work would continue with tenants to gain access.

Quotes were also being sought for the secondary flushing of the system and the thermostats that needed to be placed in each property. Once the information was available it would be shared with the Committee.

The second update given was in respect of the FOB system which was used to access blocks of flats and the maintenance of that system and managing expiry dates.

If there was a problem with the FOB system during the working day these were reported to the repairs team. If it was out of hours, it went through to the CCTV team who reported it to the On-call Team. The On-call Team could not reactivate FOBs, but they did have their own FOBs which could be used to gain access to the block of flats 24/7. ID would be checked to make sure that the tenants did live in that location. Issues would be passed on to the Repairs Team who would arrange a repair if there was a fault with the system, otherwise it would be referred to the Tenancy Team who would investigate whether the FOB had expired. A report was available which details when FOBs were due to expire and this was reviewed regularly. The Director of Housing and Projects assured the Committee that there was a comprehensive process in place.

The Chairman gave the opportunity to the Ward Councillors for the area to ask questions on the Riverside Complex. The Ward Councillors welcomed the work to resolve the problems at the complex and as part of the scrutiny process, one of the Ward Councillors asked if the Committee could be party to the three quotes for the work at the Riverside Complex.

The Director of Housing and Projects stated that they already had a procured contractor, Arran Services, in place and the Council were able to use the contractor to procure the works. The Council did not have to use them but a lot of time and

effort had gone into procuring the contract. Officers did check the quotes received for reasonableness and it was noted that three quotes were only necessary if a contract was under £50,000.

If a contract was over £50,000 the Council would have to go out to formal tender which could take between three to six months and if this method had been used rather than Arran, it would not have allowed the work to be completed now, but after the winter period. When a contractor had been procured that contractor would be used for all works, the procurement officer would check that the awarded contract did not breach the threshold which for this contractor was £11m. If the value did go above the figure of £11m the contract could not be extended.

A further question was asked about compensation, as tenants had yet to receive anything. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that information was currently being collated and this would be shared with the Committee once it had been resolved, the wait had been due to the changes within the management of the Housing Team.

The other Ward Councillor for the area indicated that he had been in extensive conversations with the Director of Housing and Projects and the Cabinet Member for Housing and that there were plans in place and he had faith in the team that the issues at the complex would be addressed.

The Chairman then asked for a proposer and seconder for the minutes of the 19 September 2024 following this the minutes were **AGREED**.

40. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service

The Cabinet Member for Housing informed the Committee that the keys for the first properties in the Corby Glen development that the Council had bought would be handed over the first week of December 2024.

41. Housing Compliance figures report

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the regular housing compliance report which gave the status of the compliance figures in relation to the Council's landlord function. Legionella, asbestos, fire risk assessments and lift inspections were all at 100%.

Gas safety inspections were at 99.24%.

Although the electrical inspections had increased to 93.51% there continued to be problems with gaining access to complete electrical certificate inspections. As with gas, the legal route would be a last resort but in situations where tenants failed to allow access, the Council needed to take all reasonable steps to inspect these properties and ensure that safety standards were maintained.

It was hoped that a proposed amendment to the Repairs Policy, whereby non-urgent repairs to properties would not be undertaken until a safety certificate was in place, would help with the situation. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that work would be undertaken with the Tenancy Team because as part of the Tenancy Agreement, tenants did have to give the council access to their property to carry out required works. Letters would be sent out to those tenants refusing access due to the importance of carrying out the safety compliance work.

A question was asked about the Damp and Mould compliance figures and what work was being carried out. The Cabinet Member for Housing stated that the Council had voluntarily added Damp and Mould to the compliance checks. Damp and mould issues had been looked at previously, but now the Council had a dedicated Team who were working through the damp and mould cases and were making progress even though more were coming in daily.

The Director of Housing and Projects stated that as well as the Damp and Mould Team there was also a Senior Team that looked at Damp and Mould cases fortnightly. All jobs were booked in by the Repairs Team or the Council's contractor and the Committee would be kept informed of progress. It was noted that the Council received around 15 reports of Damp and Mould cases a week. Surveys were carried out by the Damp and Mould team and remedial work booked in when contractors had capacity to carry out work to fit vents. Next year new legislation would come into effect which would give strict timelines for work to be carried out which was why processes were being put in place now.

Discussion on the compliance figures followed. Comments were made in respect of the graphs which currently were not useful in their context and it was stated that perhaps a 12 month period would be more helpful. A question was asked about the proposed changes to the Repairs Policy in respect of non-urgent repairs was this currently being done. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that this was not currently happening as there was nothing presently in any of the Council's policies. One Member asked about work to educate people in respect of Damp and Mould and how this is created. The Head of Technical Services, (Housing), indicated that work was currently being done on leaflets. The Member asked if these could be circulated once they were ready.

➤ **Action**

That the Committee be circulated with the leaflets in respect of Damp and Mould once they were available.

The Cabinet Member for Housing stated that information on damp and mould was reproduced regularly in the Skyline magazine which was circulated to tenants.

Members noted the current compliance figures.

42. Earlesfield Project Overview November 2024

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which detailed the current position of the Earlesfield Project. To date 45 properties had been completed, 28 properties under Phase 2 with a further 18 properties at various stages. There had been some slippage with the contractor but work was being done to avoid further slippage in the future.

The Director of Housing and Projects stated that the Council was working closely with the Contractor to enable the project to be completed by 31 March 2025. When the project was completed, it would release the 20 decant properties back onto the housing register, these properties had already gone through the project.

The Chairman once again stated that it was a massive upgrade for those living on the estate but he asked that the weekly reports be reinstated for himself and Councillor Cunnington as the Ward Councillors for the area.

One Member made reference to the visit by the Health and Safety Executive who were checking on how the asbestos in the properties was being dealt with. The Health and Safety Executive were pleased and satisfied with the work being carried out and she said that congratulations should be appreciated.

Members noted the report.

43. New Build and Acquisition Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which updated the Committee on the new build housing pipeline and purchases using the Local Authority Housing Fund.

The scheme at Swinegate, Grantham was progressing and was still on target for completion by July 2025, roofing work on the project was due to start at the end of the month.

The planning application for Wellington Way, Market Deeping was due to be submitted in November 2024 and the Cabinet Member for Housing referred to the significant amount of consultation that had been carried out in respect of the site.

Gorse Rise was a former garage site which had been demolished. Following pre-application advice, the plans had been amended, and a planning application was due in November 2024.

Site feasibility in respect of Kesteven Road, Stamford had been ongoing, the proposed scheme had been reduced to 11 units to enable more green space to be retained. Ward Councillors had been contacted in respect of the site, although no response had been received to date.

Bourne End Road, Colsterworth presented opportunities to demolish some of the existing stock and rebuild with biodiversity properties due to the size of the plots. It was hoped that a planning application would be submitted in November 2024 once a biodiversity net gain report had been received.

The Director of Housing and Projects stated that consultation in respect of the Right to Buy Scheme was being undertaken by the Government with a reduction in the discount offered. Currently the financial outcome of this proposal was unknown and the impact this would have on financing new build properties.

One Member commented on the Gorse Rise development and it was stated that this would be discussed outside of the meeting. Another comment was made about any significant risks with the developments to the Council. It was stated that each development had different risks associated with it. An example was given of the Swinegate site in Grantham. Going forward listed buildings would not be considered for development due to the risks involved.

The Director of Housing and Projects stated that each scheme was reviewed on an individual basis in respect to risk and a clear project plan was put in place with the contractor and monthly meetings took place to ensure strict budget management. Any issues would be reported to the Committee.

A further question was asked in respect of the Bourne End, Colsterworth development and whether it would work similar to the Earlesfield project to which the Cabinet Member for Housing responded.

Members noted the current position.

44. Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators: 2024/25 Mid-Year (Q2) Report

The Policy Officer presented the report which covered those Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for quarter 2 of 2024/25 in respect of Housing. Appendix A to the report gave the overall performance against the nine actions that the Committee monitored. Six actions were green being on or above the target set. Three actions were on amber, these actions were currently less than 10% off target with resolutions in place to achieve the target within a reasonable timeframe. There were no red actions. An all Member briefing on a new KPI dashboard would take place in the new year.

The Director of Housing and Projects referred to page 46 of the report which covered the Void performance. The target for void properties had been set at 100 days by 31 March 2025. Currently the target was 126 days which had reduced from the previous quarter of 143 with positive progress being made to reduce the void time. A second void contractor was currently out to tender and this would be discussed at the Cabinet meeting in December 2024 which would support reducing the timeframe down to 100 days by March 2025.

A discussion on Voids followed and the Director of Housing and Projects was asked how confident she was that the target of 100 days would be met by March 2025. She stated that with the appointment of a second contractor to work on void properties and the commitment of the team she was confident that the target in March would be achieved.

The Chairman proposed that a full report on Voids be received at the meeting of the Housing OSC in March 2025, the proposal was seconded and on being put to the vote **AGREED**.

Decision

That a full report on Voids be submitted to the March meeting of the Housing OSC in 2025.

Further discussion on voids followed. A non-Committee Member referred to the practice of erecting boards and metal shutters on void properties and whether this is still the case.

The Head of Technical Services (Housing), stated that this practice was only followed if there was a security issue, however he could not confirm at the present time whether there were any properties with South Kesteven.

➤ **Action**

That an email be forwarded to Members of the Housing OSC confirming whether there were currently any void properties boarded up within South Kesteven.

More discussion followed and it was stated that previously void properties had been shown on Stat Maps however that was no longer the case. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that she would look at how the information could now be provided.

➤ **Action**

The Director of Housing and Projects to look at an alternative means of providing void information in map form.

One Member asked about those tenants who refused air source heat pumps and denied access to properties and how this affected the KPI's. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that this was a challenge as the Council wanted to replace failed systems. As part of Wave 3 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund it was hoped that a Tenancy Liaison Officer would be recruited to be able to liaise with tenants to understand their concerns and manage the scheme.

Members noted the report.

45. Update on the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1

The Director of Housing and Projects presented the report which provided the Committee with an update on the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund projects to upgrade South Kesteven District Council housing stock with energy efficient measures.

The Council were required to achieve an average of at least Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C across its housing stock by 2030 to mitigate fuel poverty for the Council's tenants. The average EPC for the Council's housing stock was EPC D. Members were referred to paragraph 2.6 of the report which detailed the measures identified for each property and the number of properties.

To date Phase 2 of the project had completed 45 Air Source Heat Pumps in properties. Phase 3 of the project was underway at Turnor Crescent, Grantham in respect of external wall insulation. The whole street had been targeted and several properties on the street had already benefitted from the fabric upgrade so the project would focus on the remaining Council owned properties.

The next bid for funding would close on 25 November 2024. The funding requirements would be similar to the current wave, but funding would be over a three year period and all Council dwellings with a EPC rating of less than C would be eligible for the scheme. The Committee would be notified when further information was known. It was proposed that a report on Wave 3 and an update in respect of Wave 2 funding be on the agenda for the January 2025 meeting of the committee with further updates in March 2025.

A discussion followed in respect of the external wall installation and wall cladding on Council buildings with questions being asked about cladding on Council buildings and their locations. The Health, Safety and Compliance Officer made reference to the work being done in respect of fire compartmentalisation which also covered fire retardant cladding. The Chairman asked if an update in respect of cladding on Council properties would be available for the January 2025 meeting if not could an update be given in March 2025.

One Member asked if those houses that had been sold had been advised if their property had/required fire retardant cladding. The Director of Housing and Project indicated that she would follow this up.

Members noted that current position.

An adjournment took place between 15:22 – 15:40)

46. Rough Sleeper Initiative update

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which provided an update on the arrangements of the Change 4 Lincs team who were hosted by the Council.

The Change 4 Lincs initiative had been set up to tackle rough sleeping across four local authority areas: The Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding was allocated by central Government and funding was secured until March 2025.

Following a successful bid South Kesteven District Council were awarded funding for three years from 2022 until March 2025. South Kesteven District Council hosted the Change 4 Lincs Team on behalf of, North Kesteven District Council, West Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council.

The large geographical area covered presented challenges to the Outreach Team and the delivery of an effective outreach service. The number of rough sleepers continued to rise for many reasons. The Cabinet Member for Housing referred to the presentation that they had received before the meeting and the information that had been given at the presentation that a lot of the increase in rough sleeping was due to non-fault evictions, although this had not been confirmed, but it was confirmed that rough sleeping nationally was on the rise.

Although the Council encouraged partnership working, the current stance was that the Council would move away from the current model at Change 4 Lincs and focus the Council services on a rough sleeper support provision specifically in South Kesteven. West Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council would also like to follow the individual Council model.

At the present time it was not known what the rough sleeper funding would look like after March 2025 but each of the four local authorities were making plans to dissolve the current model to have individual models. It was assumed that the spending breakdown between the authorities would follow the current pattern. Work was currently on going on what the Council's offer would look like in respect of rough sleepers and this would be reported back to the Committee once the information was available.

The Chairman made reference to the current negative publicity that was circulating on social media and he thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Housing Team for all the work that they did in respect of rough sleeping in extremely difficult circumstances. This was echoed by the previous Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Dilks who praised the Head of Housing and the Homelessness Team for the tireless work that they did and he supported a bespoke model for South Kesteven going forward.

A discussion followed with the following comments/questions being raised/asked:

- The current geographical area covered was large and presented challenges.
- The increase in homelessness/rough sleeping and the need for accommodation had increased costs significantly.
- Lessons learnt with the current model would be built in to the new provision.

- Covid had impacted the initiative from when it was first set up which had affected the smooth running of the initiative from the start and had contributed to the huge overspends in the first few years.
- Due to the overspend focus had been more on support rather than accommodation with possibly more people being on the streets than the Council would have liked, this was caveated that some of the people in unsettled accommodation were reluctant to move on. People who were on the streets were more engaged to get off the streets than those who were already in some type of accommodation.
- Accommodation was not always the answer, it was stated that some of the rough sleepers had been offered accommodation but due to their own actions this accommodation had been lost.
- Many rough sleepers had complex issues and a holistic support package was required.
- Numbers of rough sleepers across the four districts were drastically different.
- When would the final arrangements be known, this was reliant on when central Government announced their plans for funding, as the funding finished in March 2025, which was a short timeframe from November the Government may roll the funding over to the next financial year.
- Funding maybe known by the end of November 2024 and the Government had indicated that they would be investing more in homelessness.
- A comprehensive spending review would be undertaken by the Government next year.
- The Government were keen to move away from “bidding” for funding to allocation.
- An example was given and it was stated that joined up support from key agencies was vital for getting people with complex needs off the streets.
- There was a Vulnerable Adults Panel which was part of a multi-agency partnership offering people bespoke support.
- How many rough sleepers were there in South Kesteven? The Head of Housing stated that she would have to come back with exact figures but she stated that a monthly return was completed and an annual count was taken every year. The annual counts had shown a clear increase and would be undertaken the following week.

Further discussion followed on how the other authorities undertook their annual counts, agreements between local authorities, that it was important that the public trust the professional officers to carry out their duties in line with legislation, that contact information was published widely with a national free phone line.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for all the work that they did.

47. Repairs and Maintenance Policy

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which updated the current Repairs and Maintenance Policy. The new Policy was more streamlined and user friendly. She highlighted where the Committee had previously agreed to include a section regarding non-urgent repairs and access to properties to carryout safety inspections for gas and electricity certification. Appendix A to the report reproduced a clear, easy to read guide on what was expected of tenants and what repairs and maintenance the Council would undertake. Appendix B gave the statutory timeframes for repairs.

Clarity was sought in respect of the timeframes and what that meant in “real” time and the Head of Technical Services (Housing) stated that the 24 hours started from when the report was made. A repair would be made safe within the 24hrs with any urgent repairs being undertaken within 4 hours.

Further discussion on access to properties and safety certificates and non-urgent repairs followed to which the Director of Housing and Projects replied. It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** to recommend the updated Policy to Cabinet for approval.

Recommendation

That the Committee:

- 1. Notes the contents of the report and the updated Repairs and Maintenance Policy, and***
- 2. Recommends the approval of the updated Repairs and Maintenance Policy to Cabinet, effective from April 2025.***

48. Work Programme 2024/25

The following items to be included on the Work Programme:

20 January 2025

- Fire Compartmentalisation – report to include cladding.
- Update on Homelessness and Rough Sleepers – to be a standing item on the agenda going forward.
- Decant Policy
- Repairs update following audit and actions to be undertaken
- Riverside project update
- Verbal update on response times to housing inquiries via email

24 March 2025

- Void report
- Update on Homelessness and Rough Sleepers

- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave 3 update

A Member asked if work could be done in respect of fobs, payments, expiry etc and also mobility scooters and where they were charged particularly in communal areas where health and safety could be an issue. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that there was a Mobility Scooter Working Group which was looking into this and the potential problems and risks. The Emergency Planning, Health and Safety Lead stated that the work did form part of the Fire Strategy because of the significant risks with scooters. An update could be given after the next meeting as a policy document was close to completion.

The Chairman concluded the meeting thanking the Housing Teams for all the work that they undertook.

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

None.

50. Close of meeting

The Chairman thanked the Housing Officers for the work that they did and closed the meeting at 16:25.