

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Commission

1:30pm – 3:20pm Thursday 13th February 2025, Room 77, The Guildhall, Alfred Gelder Street, Hull, HU12AA

Present:

Councillors: Belcher; Byrne; Cahill; Collinson A.; Coward; Hatcher (Chair); Nicola; and Wood

In attendance:

M. Kohler, Scrutiny Officer
A. Burton, Assistant Director Streetscene, Minute 72
P. Thomas, Waste Strategy & Contracts Manager, Minute 72
S. Chandler, Business Partner, Minute 73-74
M. Nearney, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods & Housing, Minute 75-80
E. Warwick, Head of Service (Business Development & Change), Minute 75
B. Smith, Head of Service (Contracting & Investment), Minute 76
L. Fairburn, Strategy & Appraisals Manager, Minute 77 & 80
B. Hanson, Head of Service (Strategy, Market Intervention & Growth, Minute 78

Apologies:

Councillors Pantelakis

Minute Number		Action to be Taken by
70	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
There were no declarations of interest relation to the following agenda items.		
Recommendations:		Reasons for Recommendations:
a) N/A.		a) N/A.

NON EXEMPT ITEMS

71	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13TH FEBRUARY 2025	
The Scrutiny Officer submitted the minutes from the meeting held on Thursday 13 th February 2025.		
Recommendations:		Reasons for Recommendations:
a) That the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 13 th February 2025 be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the chair.		a) N/A.

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WASTE MANAGEMENT COLLECTION OPTIONS

A. Burton, Assistant Director Streetscene and P. Thomas, Waste Strategy & Contracts Manager attended the meeting to present the report to Cabinet on Waste Management Collection Options.

The Commission was informed:

- i. The report set out proposals for a weekly collection of food waste in response to the statutory requirements coming into force. Funding had been made available from the government to assist with the changes required to waste collection and work would continue to be undertaken with the East Riding in terms of the joint waste contract.

The Commission discussed:

- i. How the messages would be communicated to residents; the Assistant Director advised that trials had been undertaken to make the process as easy as possible and work was being undertaken with the housing service and the private sector along with use of a marketing budget on a rolling programme to inform residents.
- ii. That the report mentioned charging for collection of garden waste and whether authorities were still able to do this; the Waste Strategy & Contracts Manager advised that many local authorities did charge however this was not currently in place within Hull.
- iii. The deposit return scheme, that this was welcomed; the Assistant Director Streetscene advised that firm plans had not been made around these proposals however this would be reported back to Commission once requirements had been clarified.
- iv. Waste collections for non-household and council office premises; the Assistant Director advised that work was being undertaken with Property Services in terms of implementation of the commercial waste requirements.
- v. That the report was welcomed in terms of staff increases and a growing fleet however how would this be achieved taking account of the deadline for implementation; the Assistant Director explained that plans were in place for increased staff and the fleet which would be triggered once the report had been agreed at Cabinet.

<p>vi. The extended producer responsibility and what this would entail; the Waste Strategy & Contracts Manager explained that manufacturers would pay for the cost of disposing of their packaging. Households would not experience any difference in services however there would be a tax placed upon companies. The level of funding which would come through to Hull would be dependent upon performance.</p> <p>vii. The terraced properties without gardens and the numbers of bins kept on the street; the Waste Strategy & Contracts Manager advised that waste collection would be reinvigorated by the use of caddies for those properties without gardens.</p>	
Recommendations:	Reasons for Recommendations:
<p>a) That the Commission support option 1 as outlined within the report.</p>	<p>a) To endorse the most deliverable option in terms of the statutory requirements for waste collection.</p>

73	LEGAL SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIPS DIRECTORATE (LSPD) 2024/2025 PERIOD 9 BRIEFING PAPER – GENERAL FUND	
<p>S. Chandler, Business Partner attended the meeting to provide an overview of the general fund revenue budget for LSPD and to provide a key point summary on how the budget is influenced by internal and external factors that affect the directorates budget achievability as at period 9 financial monitoring.</p> <p>The Commission was informed:</p> <p>i. That the service was projecting a £2m overspend. Customer services was forecasting a pressure of just under half a million due to not achieving savings through digitisation however there were plans to bring this forward and Neighbourhoods and Housing was overspent by £1.5m through the use of temporary accommodation which would be mitigated by underspend and maximising the use of grants.</p>		

<p>The Commission discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Actions being taken to address the homelessness temporary accommodation situation due to the huge gap between the budget and spend; the Business Partner advised that additional grants had been awarded during 2025/2026 totalling £2.4m with 50% being allocated towards prevention and 50% on temporary accommodation and buying properties. ii. Government grant income and non-grant variances and reasons why the Community centre, early release from prison scheme and other pressures had been grouped together; the Business Partner advised that variances were due to profiling issues which had been earlier or later than expected and amounted to pay related overspend. The budget lines would be amended to profile community centres separately going forward. iii. Funeral and bereavement services, that these services were high risk and how these services were being marketed; the Business Partner confirmed that there was an offer for cheaper funerals which was being marketed through businesses as well as with residents. 	
Recommendations:	Reasons for Recommendations:
a) That the report be noted.	a) N/A.

74	LEGAL SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIPS DIRECTORATE (LSPD) 2024/2025 PERIOD 9 BRIEFING PAPER – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	
<p>S. Chandler, Business Partner attended the meeting to provide an overview of the Housing Revenue Account and to provide a key point summary on how the budget is influenced by internal and external factors that affect the directorate’s budget achievability as at period 9 financial monitoring.</p> <p>The Commission was informed:</p>		

- i. That there was a surplus of £3.1m due to overachieving in terms of vacancies within the Building Safety Team. Rent income was also overachieving with void performance better than budgeted for. There were less right to buy applications and interest on balances and reserves was higher than anticipated.

The Commission discussed:

- i. Non-dwelling rents, that some of the council owned garages were not fit for purpose, being disused and broken into and clarification of the current rent charges for a garage; the Business Partner and Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods & Housing explained the plans to turn some of the garages into hardstanding areas and the small sites scheme would be reported back to a future meeting. Charges for garages were currently at £10 per week for council tenants and £12 per week for non-tenants.
- ii. The leaseholder charges and that these would increase with the reduction in sales; the Business Partner advised that the level of discounts had changed in relation to right to buy and clarified that due to this, sales would be lower.
- iii. Whether any works to flats being made as a result of the surveys undertaken through the Housing Building Safety Team would see a charge to leaseholders taking into account that the building was our asset; the Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods & Housing advised that this would be a central cost in terms of the work being undertaken through the Building Safety Team however there may be charges in terms of works carried out to buildings. This would be reported in further detail, within a future report, once works required were known.
- iv. The report on reserves appended to the paper; that this had been requested by members. The report showed that reserves for Hull currently stood at just over £1000 per property which totalled £4.5m in reserves and was significantly lower than average.
- v. The level of reserves and whether more reserves resulted in a better quality of services; the Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods & Housing explained that there were currently many unknowns in relation to stock condition and there was a need to keep some reserves for this purpose.

Recommendations:	Reasons for Recommendations:
a) That the report be noted.	a) N/A.

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**NEIGHBOURHOODS & HOUSING QUARTERLY UPDATE
REPORT QUARTER 4, 2024-25**

M. Nearney, Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods & Housing and E. Warwick, Head of Service (Business Development & Change) attended the meeting to provide the Commission with an update on the Neighbourhoods and Housing quarterly performance at quarter 4.

The Commission was informed:

- i. The average waiting times for the contact centre had decreased and there was still a drive for tenants to use the My Housing App for which there had been an 8% increase however only 7% of users were logging repairs which was too low. There would be an introduction of a 5-day repair as the number of emergency repairs was currently too high.
- ii. There was a continued drive in relation to voids alongside work on the allocations process as 51% of first-time views on properties were being turned down and a conversation was required in terms of choices.
- iii. There were pressures in relation to homelessness however the temporary housing stock had now increased by 81 properties.
- iv. The number of routine tenancy visits were progressing well however the visits had generated an additional £377,000 of repairs which had a potential impact on KWL and would be managed carefully. Best practice showed that visits to 20% of stock should be carried out annually.
- v. There had been a budget increase to mitigate the backlog in the adaptations process and there was now a strong process in place linking in with Fortem who had increased their budget. The outturn for this year was £1.5m and KWL were now surveying properties for works to be scheduled and costed which would hopefully see the backlog of works reduced.
- vi. Planned works continued to be funded through the capital programme in relation to decent homes and surveys had been completed in terms of high-risk properties and potential demolition.
- vii. 10 of the 12 tenant satisfaction measures had seen an improvement which was above average.

The Commission discussed:

- i. The data around first time offers on properties being refused and that it was surprising that people would bid for properties they didn't want, and whether there was further information in regard to the discussions taking place at a senior level within the partnership between the Council and KWL on repairs performance; the Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods and Housing explained that operational conversations were taking place with the Director of KWL and any issues/concerns were worked through together, setting the tone for the partnership and support provided.
- ii. The number of properties not meeting the decent homes standard; the Assistant Director explained that the numbers would be shared with members off agenda.
- iii. The four remaining blocks being prioritised for building safety factors; the Assistant Director advised that there were 19 blocks in total, three in the West Area would be demolished. Further clarification would be shared with the Commission off agenda in terms of the high-rise blocks.
- iv. That the statistics in relation to voids and that the work being done so far to reduce numbers was commended. There were concerns however in relation to the 51% of first-time refusals on properties and whether there was potential for videos of properties to be made available which could be sent to potential tenants prior to viewing in person, also taking into account the costs associated with in person viewings, and in relation to the use of My Housing App, what could be done to encourage more use; the Head of Service explained that property videos had been considered previously and was not out of the question however more work was required in terms of how this would work in practice. The service was now at the point of innovation in terms of voids and this suggestion would be taken away for further consideration. Improvements to the My Housing App in relation to reporting repairs would contribute to encouraging more use.
- v. Homelessness and the difficulties in sourcing housing, particularly for those people rough sleeping; the Assistant Director explained that this was extremely difficult and there were often acute needs associated. There was a significant overspend in this area and measures were being put in place such as acquiring properties for temporary accommodation. The Changing Futures Programme through Adult Services would undertake work in terms of accommodation assessments and supporting people from temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation. The Head of Service added that it would also depend on the level of need and that single people would be easier to house as opposed to families who would require larger properties.
- vi. The difficulties for residents to access services in person due to closures of customer service centres and rent offices, particularly for older people; the Head of Service explained that the Community Hubs were now in place for increased in person provision and members commented that visibility of the hubs could be better to ensure people know where they are placed through use of Neighbourhood Co-ordinators and local notice boards.

Recommendations:	Reasons for Recommendations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) That confirmation of the number of non-decent homes be circulated to the Commission off agenda. b) That confirmation of the specific blocks within the programme for surveying high rise blocks be circulated to members off agenda. c) That better promotion of the community hubs be further considered and that members be notified of the venues and opening times off agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To ensure members had an awareness of the data around non-decency. b) To ensure members had an awareness of the specific blocks within the programme. c) To enable increased access to in-person services for those unable to access through alternative methods.

76	<p>APPOINTMENT OF A SUPPLIER FOR THE PROVISION OF VISUAL STOCK CONDITION SURVEYS AND ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES (EPCs)</p>	
<p>M. Nearney, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods & Housing and B. Smith, Head of Service (Contracting & Investment) attended the meeting to present the report to the Leader for the appointment of a supplier for the provision of visual stock condition surveys and energy performance certificates (EPCs).</p> <p>The Commission was informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The report sought approval to go out to tender for the provision of visual stock condition surveys and EPCs which would be assessed on 60% price and 40% quality. 		

- ii. The undertaking of stock condition surveys and energy performance certificates was a mandatory requirement. This contract would support the Housing Strategy to undertake 4600 annually which was important for funding bids.
- iii. A previous supplier was not performing to standard, and a local supplier had been engaged through dispensation on a temporary arrangement in view of the upcoming tender process.

The Commission discussed:

- i. Clarification of the 60% price and 40% quality; the Assistant Director and Head of Service advised that the tenders would be assessed on this measure i.e. valuing quality over price and indicates to the bidders what is required of the contract.

Recommendations:	Reasons for Recommendations:
a) That the Commission support the recommendations as set out in the report.	a) To meet the regulatory requirements of the Council.

77	ROSSETT HOUSE STOCK APPRAISAL: CONSULTATION RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS	
<p>M. Nearney, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods & Housing and L. Fairburn, Strategy & Appraisals Manager attended the meeting to present the report to Cabinet in relation to the Rossett House Stock Appraisal.</p> <p>The Commission was informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. That the proposals as set out within the report were based on the results of the consultation and there were recommendations to demolish the properties. 		

- ii. 61% of residents consulted were in favour of demolition. The survey was also undertaken within the wider community with a 3% response rate also supported demolition.
- iii. Work would be undertaken manage expectations of individual residents through the publication of a communications plan and an individual caseworker with contact point.
- iv. There was an aim to replace the property with 25 new units, also acquiring more properties within the area.

The Commission discussed:

- i. Confirmation that the 25 new properties would be affordable council properties.
- ii. Resident and ward councillor engagement; the Strategy & Appraisals Manager explained that ward members had been briefed on two occasions, before and after the consultation with residents.

Recommendations:	Reasons for Recommendations:
a) That Option 2 as outlined within the report be supported.	a) To enable the demolition of the property to proceed due to the urgent action required in terms of the condition and required investment.

78	DECISION RECORD FOR PURCHASE OF AFFORDABLE RENTED HOMES & THE HOUSING GROWTH PLAN	
<p>M. Nearney, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods & Housing and B. Hanson, Head of Service (Strategy, Market Intervention & Growth) attended the meeting to present the decision record to purchase affordable rented homes and Housing Growth Plan report for review.</p> <p>The Commission was informed:</p>		

- i. The decision record was produced for the purchase of turnkey properties which had enacted the recommendations of the Housing Growth Plan report which was agreed at Cabinet in January.

The Commission discussed:

- i. Whether the properties being purchased offered good value for money; the Assistant Director explained that the service ensured the value for money question was present when purchasing properties with a market valuation undertaken. A market assessment was undertaken through RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors), and a property would not be bought for more than what it was worth.
- ii. That four-bedroom properties would be attractive for right to buy and whether there was a risk that they would cease to be council provision; the Head of Service advised that the rules on right to buy had shifted through national policy and was now less attractive. There was protection over a 30-year period in that the properties would not be sold for less than what they were bought for.
- iii. The Council's allocations policy and that it was generous in terms of allocations into four-bedroomed houses; the Strategy & Appraisals Manager added that families that were lacking bedrooms were awarded more points taking into account genders of children and provision of a bedroom for each child. The Allocations Policy was in the process of being reviewed and the under-occupancy scheme was also in place which offered incentives through financial and practical support for tenants to downsize and free up the larger properties.

Recommendations:	Reasons for Recommendations:
a) That the report be noted.	a) N/A.

79	EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC	
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<p>To consider the exclusion of the press and public for the items listed as exempt: Proposed Purchase of Property for Temporary Housing. The Committee discussed the item and agreed that the report should be taken as exempt.</p>	
<p>Recommendations:</p>	<p>Reasons for Recommendations:</p>
<p>a) As per the minute.</p>	<p>a) As per the minute.</p>

<p>80</p>	<p>PROPOSED PURCHASE OF PROPERTY FOR TEMPORARY HOUSING</p>	
<p>M. Nearney, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods & Housing and L. Fairburn, Strategy & Appraisals Manager attended the meeting to present the report to the Leader in relation to the proposed purchase of property for temporary accommodation. The Committee fully discussed the report and made recommendations based on that discussion.</p>		
<p>Recommendations:</p>		<p>Reasons for Recommendations:</p>
<p>a) That option 1 as outlined within the report be supported.</p>		<p>a) To enable the purchase of a property for temporary accommodation provision.</p>