

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 August 2023

**PRESENT:**

**Labour Group**

Councillor S Bambrick (Chair) and Councillor M Gee (Vice-Chair)  
and Councillors A Jones and L Mulgrew.

**Conservative Group**

Councillor A Kirke.

**In Attendance**

Councillor A Wheelton

OS/09 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee was informed that apologies had been received from Councillor G Jones (Labour Group).

OS/10 **MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022.

OS/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM ITEMS ON AGENDA**

The Committee was informed that no Declarations of Interest had been received.

OS/12 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the Public had been received.

OS/13 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

**MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**

OS/14 **REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) –  
REPORT ON USAGE**

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer, the Chair was asked to note paragraph 3.5 of the report that there had been no authorisations during the period from January to August 2023.

**RESOLVED:**

***1.1 The Committee noted the internal report on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.***

OS/15 **HOUSING RELETS AND VOID PROPERTIES – VERBAL UPDATE**

The Head of Housing presented a verbal update to the Committee following the January 2023 report as follows:

The new contractor had started in April and Novus reported labour issues, hence only 28 properties let in the January to March period. Between April and June, a further 63 properties were let and during July and August a total of 59 properties had been let. The vacant property turnaround time had improved from 102 days for properties let in March to 37 days for the August lettings. The number of void properties was reducing quickly and there were 81 properties empty at the time of the meeting with 29 of those almost ready to let and 52 undergoing repair work.

There had been updates to the Action Plan at Housing and Community Services Committees with some items still outstanding including the appointment of an electrical surveyor.

Members raised queries regarding guidance for refugees and asylum seekers, the length of the contract for the repairs contractor, whether the in-house team would take on repairs next year, the database records, apprenticeships, the status of difficult to let properties, electricians in older properties and issues with mould and asbestos.

The Head of Housing informed the Committee that Ukrainian refugees had different protection under the law but there had been no application received. It was explained that the Council was seeking advice from the government on refugees leaving hotel accommodation but no instructions had been received.

The Head of Housing confirmed that in empty properties mould was easy to spot and that damp proof courses would be installed in many properties. Asbestos was covered in the Void report with a new regulation framework which included checks for gas and asbestos. The in-house team would require expansion, equipment and accreditation to take on additional repair duties. The Housing database included most of the property data, but a stock condition survey would be arranged in the future. It was noted that the database system must comply

with the Housing Regulator on all levels. The contract length for the second contractor company had been extended for three years. There would be opportunities for two property support apprentices plus work experience for locally based young people.

There were 800 properties identified for older people however, some did not fit requirements such as those on a second floor.

The Head of Housing confirmed that tenants were not responsible for the removal of asbestos from a property.

OS/16 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the Work Programme to the Committee, noting that the Rural Prosperity Fund would be included in the Work Programme for 2024-25 and that Section 106 Funds Report was included in the Work Programme for the October meeting. Members requested that the Section 106 Funds report should cover the expenditure of funds by third parties and if possible, colleagues from health should be invited to the meeting to cover the obstacles to spending funds.

**RESOLVED:**

***That the Committee considered and approved the updated work programme.***

OS/17 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RESOLVED:**

***That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it would be likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.***

OS/18 **EXEMPT QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11**

The Committee was informed that no exempt questions from Members of the Council had been received.

The Meeting terminated at 18:40 hours.

COUNCILLOR S BAMBRICK

CHAIR