

Nottingham City Council

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 18 September 2023 from 10.01 am - 12.05 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Sam Harris (Chair)
Councillor Sarita-Marie Rehman-Wall (Vice Chair)
Councillor Kevin Clarke
Councillor AJ Matsiko
Councillor Michael Savage
Councillor Adele Williams

Absent

Councillor Nadia Farhat

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Nancy Barnard	- Head of Governance
Councillor Steve Battlemuch	- Portfolio Holder for Skills, Growth, Economic Development and Property
Councillor Jay Hayes	- Portfolio Holder for Housing
Nicki Jenkins	- Director for Economic Development
James Lavender	- Governance Officer
Kevin Lowry	- Strategic Director for Housing
Sajeeda Rose	- Corporate Director for Growth and City Development

1 Membership Change

Councillor Ethan Radford has stepped down from the Committee, so there is currently a vacancy.

2 Appointment of Vice Chair

Resolved to appoint Councillor Sarita-Marie Rehman-Wall as Vice-Chair of this Committee for this municipal year (May 2023 to April 2024)

3 Apologies for absence

Councillor Nadia Farhat – personal

4 Declarations of Interests

None

5 Committee Terms of Reference

The Head of Governance noted that recent national legislation passed by the Government provided additional responsibilities to landlords and local authorities in

terms of the social housing provision. As a result of this legislation, the Terms of Reference for the Committee will be reported to Full Council for updating in due course.

The Committee Terms of Reference and the proposed changes to them were noted.

6 Economic Plan

Councillor Steve Battlemuch, Portfolio Holder for Skills, Growth, Economic Development and Property, Sajeeda Rose, Corporate Director for Growth and City Development, and Nicki Jenkins, Director for Economic Development and Property presented an update to the Committee about the emerging Economic Plan for Nottingham. The following information was highlighted:

- (a) the Council is current halfway through the refresh of its Economic Plan. The finalised details of the plan will come back to a future meeting of the Committee;
- (b) the Economic Plan follows from the Post-COVID Recovery Plan and was a requirement of the Improvement and Assurance Board (IAB), but there is a recognised responsibility within the Council to regularly renew the Economic Plan based on the current economic situation faced by the City;
- (c) the renewal of the plan is particularly important with the new devolution arrangements for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire coming soon;
- (d) there has been a consultation with business partners, Nottingham's universities, and other identified partners;
- (e) the plan considers the urban area of Nottingham as a whole, not just within the City boundary, so neighbouring local authorities have been consulted;
- (f) most Core Cities have a clear economic plan;
- (g) the emphasis of the plan is to grow and improve the economic activities which Nottingham does well whilst focusing on areas in need of improvement;
- (h) Ernst and Young (EY) Ltd have been commissioned to assist the Council to deliver the Economic Plan;
- (a) the plan aims to be inclusive and consider the impact upon identified groups and communities;
- (b) the plan will contain domain vision statements for how these activities (or 'interventions') shall be delivered;
- (c) the proposed areas of intervention include Infrastructure and Regeneration, Enterprise and Investment, People and Skills, and City Centres and Neighbourhoods;

During the discussion and in response to questions from the Committee, the following points were raised:

- (d) the Council and the wider Nottingham community are the drivers of the plan;
- (e) the role of EY is to bring expertise and capacity into delivering the plan;
- (f) the universities and other partners have been providing the data which informs the interventions outlined in the plan;
- (g) each intervention in the plan is interdependent on the other, for example, the carbon neutral ambitions for the city fit in the need to provide an easily accessible public transport network. Likewise, growing industries like computer gaming within the city can attract graduates to stay in the city, and who in turn will need affordable accommodation suitable for them to occupy;
- (h) the new devolution arrangements can provide additional funding opportunities to provide affordable accommodation within Nottingham and the wider East Midlands;
- (i) the data should identify the pull factors which cause people to move to Nottingham for work;
- (j) financial wellbeing is foundational to good health and officers are working with colleagues in Public Health to identify interdependencies. Similar work is underway on carbon neutrality;
- (k) economic inactivity rates are above the national average in the East Midlands. Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire recently won funding to help economically inactive people back into work;
- (l) many people in Nottingham have no or low work skills, so the creation of entry level jobs are key to encourage people back into the workforce;
- (m) tourism is an area of consideration for the plan with the focus being on creating a programme for Nottingham as a weekend destination for people coming to attend sporting and cultural events;
- (n) the development of housing will include different types to appeal to different groups, e.g., students, graduates, and low income families;
- (o) the local knowledge of Councillors will be welcome in the development of the plan;
- (p) the Growth Hub, which covers Derby and Nottingham, helps young entrepreneurs develop businesses of their own. The Growth Hub works with the plan developers to identify gaps for types of business and specific areas within the city where graduates can settle in and develop a business.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for attending and requested that the plan be brought back to the Committee prior to implementation.

Resolved to recommend that the Portfolio Holder give consideration to how Councillors can be involved in the development of the Economic Development Plan.

7 Housing Maintenance and Repairs

Councillor Jay Hayes, Portfolio Holder for Housing, and Kevin Lowry, Strategic Director for Housing, delivered a report into the Council's role in social housing maintenance and repairs. The following information was highlighted:

- (a) the maintenance of mechanical and electrical equipment is done through third party specialists and managed through a very technically competent team. However, there are skills gaps and supply issues with the repairs service which the Council is aiming to address;
- (b) repairs and housing maintenance are the most important satisfaction measure for tenants from landlords;
- (c) the Council is aiming to invest around £149 million to improve the social housing stock over the next 4 years. This investment will help fund improvements to make homes warmer and more energy-efficient by installing new kitchens and bathrooms, energy-efficient windows, solar panels and external wall insulation;
- (d) the Council is very diligent with fire safety standards;
- (e) when Nottingham City Homes (NCH) Ltd provided this service, they regularly undertook tenant surveys in each quarter. They randomly selected tenants based on ward, ethnicity, age, and other characteristics. More robust sampling has been introduced and this has revealed lower satisfaction with housing maintenance and repairs than previously reported. The repairs service is not to a standard which is satisfactory for tenants;
- (f) since the publication of the report, the measure of repairs completed within target scale has since been met;
- (g) the housing maintenance and repairs service is on an improvement journey and the Council now has a better understanding of processes than when it initially took responsibility for delivering the service;
- (h) the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 has brought in a new regulatory regime to support the commitment to driving up standards and holding landlords accountable for providing social housing residents with decent homes;
- (i) the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and consumer standards will be used as additional measures to hold landlords to account for the services they provide;

- (j) the housing regulator will be inspecting providers where they have identified concerns with services;

During the discussion and in response to questions from the Committee, the following points were raised:

- (k) so far, next to no reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (Raac) has been identified in the Council's social housing stock, however the final report is due on 25 September. A public message will go out to reassure tenants about the Council's housing stock;
- (l) HRA money will be invested in the Housing Repair Fund which had previously been reduced to generate savings;
- (m) last years' budget was determined when NCH was providing the service. £6.5 million has been set aside by the Council for a growth in core activities around housing maintenance and to address damp and mould. The developing budget for next year also addresses the housing maintenance budget;
- (n) better data analysis can improve repairs in particular areas. The data identifies jobs addressed at the first point, but then had to be addressed for a second time due to failures from the first;
- (o) the Housing Services Regulations Act contains powers to allow tenants to compel their landlords to undertake alleviation works on their properties, particularly where damp and mould is present;
- (p) there is no additional funding from the Government for housing repair, maintenance, and fire safety work. The HRA budget will fund these activities;
- (q) there will be national benchmarking figures once TSMs have been submitted by local authorities;
- (r) tenants need to be active to help improve the service. The Tenant Participation Advisory Service supports the Council to engage with tenants not previously engaged with. The Council will then be better informed about the tenant experience and can make better informed decisions;
- (s) tenant representatives can be appointed to this Committee as co-opted members. The number of tenant representatives still needs to be determined;
- (t) there is recognition that there is a responsibility for tenants to let the Council know about potential works at their properties, but also that the Council should provide a variety of methods of communication for tenants to allow them to inform the Council of any potential works needed;
- (u) colleagues going into properties for maintenance and repairs need to be empowered and informed about the level of priority for the works they are investigating. Diagnostic tools on smartphones and remote video calls can assist with this;

- (v) 40% of enquiries are emergency repairs. The right channels of priority need to be communicated to tenants;
- (w) the Government funding of £9 million in cladding replacement is aimed at private providers, not local authorities;
- (x) TSMs aim to be representative, based on housing type, age group, area, gender, property type, ethnicity, and lengths of tenancy. Length of tenancy is an interesting demographic as there is a higher satisfaction among tenants in a property after 1 to 3 years of occupation, compared to a lower satisfaction among tenants living in a property for around 10 years;
- (y) Midlands Net Zero Hub, European Union and central government funding has helped retrofit certain housing stock, but it cannot provide an entire retrofitting of the Council's current housing stock, as according to the estate agents Savills, it would cost an estimated £27,000 per property;
- (z) for the housing stock to become truly carbon neutral, this would have to be coupled with a decarbonising of the national grid;
- (aa) the categories of what constituted an emergency repair are too wide, so colleagues class some maintenance and repairs as 'urgent' to be on the safe side. Consultation with tenants needs to take place about what constitutes an emergency maintenance or repair, as well as a reasonable timescale is for non-urgent repairs and maintenance. The previous NCH Tenants Handbook was a helpful guide about what categorised as an emergency;
- (bb) apprenticeship schemes provided by the housing service for people aged up to 22 needs to be extended and communicated to areas and demographics which would be most likely to apply for them;
- (cc) the 'lift and shift' of the housing service from NCH to the Council is an ongoing process. Data protection and procurement have been integrated with Council processes and dialogue is ongoing regarding other areas.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for attending.

8 Future Meeting Dates

Resolved for the Committee to meet on the following Mondays at 10am:

- **16 October 2023**
- **18 December 2023**
- **22 January 2023**
- **19 February 2024**
- **15 April 2024**

9 Work Programme

In the proposed agenda for 16 October meeting, the Preparedness for County Combined Authority item might need to be rescheduled due to officer availability. The

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee - 18.09.23

best way to scrutinise the item on homelessness, including the involvement of external bodies, will be considered and discussed with the Chair.

The Committee noted the Work Programme.