

Nottingham City Council

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 15 April 2024 from 10:00am to 11:30am

Membership

Present

Councillor Sam Harris (Chair)
Councillor Kevin Clarke
Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor Michael Savage
Councillor Adele Williams

Absent

Councillor AJ Matsiko
Councillor Sarita-Marie Rehman-Wall

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Matt Gregory - Head of Planning Strategy and Geographic Information
Councillor Jay Hayes - Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Angela Kandola - Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport and Planning
Adrian Mann - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer
Sajeeda Rose - Corporate Director for Growth and City Development
Damon Stanton - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer
Geoff Wharton - Consultant Strategic Director of Housing

36 Apologies for Absence

Councillor AJ Matsiko - work commitments
Councillor Sarita-Marie Rehman-Wall - unwell

37 Declarations of Interests

In the interests of transparency in relation to item 5 (Consumer Standards for Social Housing), Councillor Michael Savage declared that he is a Council tenant.

38 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2024 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

39 Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan

Sajeeda Rose, Corporate Director for Growth and City Development, and Matt Gregory, Head of Planning Strategy and Geographic Information, presented a report on the development of the new Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan (GNSP). The following points were raised:

- a) The GNSP is being produced by the Local Authorities for Broxtowe, Gedling, Rushcliffe and Nottingham, working together to prepare a statutory Local Plan for their area. The preparation of the GNSP is overseen by the Greater Nottingham Joint Planning Advisory Board, which includes the relevant executive members from each of the constituent partner Councils. The Board meets quarterly and receives progress reports on the GNSP.
- b) The GNSP will replace the Council's current Aligned Core Strategy, which was prepared in partnership with Broxtowe and Gedling. The GNSP will cover various strategic planning matters, principally future housing provision and spatial distribution of that provision. It will also outline the required housing mix (including social and affordable housing), employment matters relating to the building of housing and infrastructure, town and city centres, environmental impacts and mitigating climate change, and transport priorities.
- c) The development of a collective Local Plan was agreed as the constituent partner Councils have a long history of working together on in these areas and ultimately, housing and employment matters cross Local Authority boundaries. The aim is to jointly develop a coherent and consistent set of strategic planning policies across the local area.
- d) There is a proposal for 52,710 new homes to be built within the GNSP, half of which are expected to be provided within Nottingham and 67,490 within the wider Greater Nottingham area. There is a 'Standard Method' formula set by the Government to calculate the appropriate number of homes in an area. The formula takes into account future household projections and affordability ratios. There is, however, an additional 30% uplift applied for the 20 largest urban authorities in England.
- e) There are a number of consequences to this uplift, as it does not take into account local issues or land provision. Nottingham is tightly bound by geographical constraints and already developed land, so it will be more difficult to reach the uplifted figure. The Council does not consider that it can meet the entirety of the 30% uplift, so there will be a shortfall of around 6000 homes. The partner Councils have argued that they are unable to support the shortfall in the city in their area as much of their land is designated as greenbelt, where the National Planning Policy Framework sets a high bar for development, so the GNSP will put forward to the public examination that there will be a shortfall to the national housing target overall.
- f) Most of the sites allocated within the GNSP for development have already been identified in existing Local Plans and are being rolled forward, and the majority already have planning permission. The Broad Marsh and Stanton Tip represent strategic development sites in the city, which could deliver 1,500 homes between them. There are two other strategic sites in the GNSP area, being the Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station in Rushcliffe and Bennerley in Broxtowe, and both have been allocated for development purposes. There is a strategy of concentrating developments close to existing infrastructure such as schools, roads and transport hubs.

- g) The GNSP is now close to pre-submission stage, with the final version expected to be adopted by March 2026.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- h) The Committee queried whether there was adequate infrastructure to support the proposed increased supply of housing. It was explained that, alongside the GNSP, an Infrastructure Delivery Plan has been developed, which has involved the major infrastructure providers and sets out what new infrastructure is required, when it is required and how it is going to be paid for – including through Section 106 agreement contributions from developers towards new infrastructure. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will also review the transport needs of the strategic sites to assess whether further transport infrastructure is required.
- i) The Committee asked how the GNSP would support the Council's carbon neutrality ambitions, including through the provision of electrical vehicle charging, the use of sustainable building materials and the potential for on-site energy generation. It was set out that the Building Regulations now make a number of provisions for achieving the sustainable development of new residential properties, including the provision of electric car charging points.
- j) The Committee asked how success would be measured in relation to the GNSP, and whether the proposed shortfall against the national housing target presented any risks. It was explained that there will be a monitoring framework to go alongside the GNSP to assess the delivery of the new homes, alongside jobs and infrastructure. Ultimately, the 30% uplift represents an arbitrary number and is not based on local demographics or land supply, so the Council considers that the proposed shortfall is justified. This position will be tested through the public examination process by an independent Planning Inspector for formal agreement.
- k) The Committee asked how the delivery of the GNSP could be supported by the new East Midlands Combined County Authority (CCA). It was reported that the creation of the CCA would result in £16.8 million being allocated to new homes on brownfield land. The CCA will not have Planning powers and so Local Plans still need to be prepared, but it could be possible in the long-term for the CCA to take a strategic role in wider Planning matters. The GNSP will provide certainty to the CCA that the Council has allocated and is committed to the development of brownfield sites, and this strengthens the business case for additional, regional funding.
- l) The Committee queried how the required housing mix for development would be established, particularly in the context of affordable and student housing. It was explained that the GNSP focused on the overall housing need at the strategic level, so the type of mix was still subject to consideration but, when confirmed, would be balanced reflect the needs of the city and the market demand.
- m) The Committee queried why the shortfall for housing in Nottingham could not be met across the wider GNSP area. It was reported that new housing is a contentious issue for partner Councils, particularly as it would often mean seeking to build on greenbelt. There is a strong case set out in the GNSP to justify the shortfall against the national target. However, if the independent Planning

Inspector were to take a different view, the GNSP would then have to be reviewed. It is, however, much easier to meet industrial and office need across boundaries. The GNSP sets out high level numbers for the amount of affordable housing to be delivered, and the needs for and occupancy rates of student housing are monitored closely. The spatial distribution of the homes will be centred around public transport links to assist with carbon neutral plans.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending the meeting to present the report and answer the Committee's questions, and noted that the Portfolio Holder had been delayed in joining the meeting and so had not been able to contribute to the item.

Resolved:

- 1) To request that information is provided on the general detail of the mix of housing types and tenures that need to be delivered within the city as part of the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan (GNSP), when available.**
- 2) To recommend that contingency planning is carried out (with engagement with District and Borough Council partners) on how the Government's housing target for Nottingham might be met if the shortfall proposed currently within the GNSP is not approved by the independent Planning Inspector.**
- 3) To recommend that effective business cases for the strategic developments identified within the GNSP are in place so that the needed, upfront funding to commence these projects can be sought from the East Midlands Combined County Authority as soon as possible.**

40 Consumer Standards for Social Housing

Councillor Jay Hayes, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Sajeeda Rose, Corporate Director for Growth and City Development, and Geoff Wharton, Consultant Strategic Director of Housing, presented a report on how the Council is responding to delivering the new national Consumer Standards for social housing. The following points were raised:

- a) Following the tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, the Government published the Social Housing Green Paper 'New Deal for Social Housing' and the Social Housing White Paper. This signalled an increased Government focus on the regulation of social housing, in particular in respect of building safety and ensuring greater transparency for residents, enabling them to scrutinise performance and have a voice in how their homes are managed. As a result, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has published its new Consumer Standards, which all social housing providers will be required to adhere to from April 2024. There are four new Standards, which are the safety and quality of homes standard; the transparency, influence and accountability standard; the neighbourhood and community standard; and the tenancy standard.
- b) Since Nottingham City Homes (NCH) was brought back in-house, the Council has been reviewing all aspects of housing delivery such as repairs, maintenance, tenant engagement and governance arrangements and, as such, the new

Standards are timely as an opportunity for the Council to demonstrate the improvements that it has made through the new inspection regime. The Council has met with the RSH to discuss regulator's role, and a reciprocal meeting has been offered to demonstrate how the Council will respond to the new Standards.

- c) Using the Housing Quality Network (HQN) Toolkit, a review of how the Standards are being delivered within Housing Services has been undertaken. The review indicates that over half of the formal measures have a medium to high confidence rating in terms of the correct policies, procedures and evidence being in place. However, there is still a great deal of work to be done. The review has been used to develop an overall Action Plan, which is then being embedded into each relevant Service Plan. Progress towards implementation is monitored by the Housing Department Leadership Team.
- d) A number of issues have been inherited following bringing NCH back in-house, such as a complete stock condition survey not having been completed in over 8 years. This is being addressed as a full stock condition survey is underway and will be completed within the next year. A new Housing Assurance Board (HAB) has been put in place to strengthen the voice of tenants. Performance against key objectives will be monitored much more closely and regular feedback will be provided to the Portfolio Holder.
- e) RSH will use four categories of 'C' rating for inspection outcomes. The RSH expects that very few organisations to be given the highest C1 rating initially, and it is likely that the regulator will focus most on those given C3 and C4 ratings. The Council has carried out a self-assessment and has an Action Plan for improvement in place already, so that it will be able to demonstrate a clear position of self-awareness to the RSH.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- f) The Committee ask what the Council's strengths and weaknesses were in relation to its current delivery of the Standards. It was explained that there were a number of 'technical failures' that had caused low ratings in the initial review process, such as NCH policy documentation needing to be converted and updated to become Council policy documentation, and that work was being done to address these quickly. The stock condition survey being carried out is needed for compliance and the informed development of effective investment plans. Due to the importance of bringing NCH in-house quickly, transitional activity has continued to be undertaken throughout the last year – and this has been additionally complicated by the need to also restructure to comply with the new regulatory position.
- g) The Committee asked what improvements had been made since NCH had been brought in-house, and the impact on tenant experience. It was reported that the commitment to undertake a 100% stock survey was a significant one, as the Council has over 26,000 properties and most other organisations would only survey around 20% of their stock. A full survey will allow the Council to develop future business plans so it knows where to channel its investment to the best effect. Interviews are currently underway for tenants to join the HAB, which is being conducted by an independent body. It is important that the 12 HAB

members are representative of the Council tenant community as a whole, so time is being taken to recruit the right tenants. The management of complaints is now being done separately to the Housing team to ensure a properly independent 'customer champion' function.

- h) The Committee queried what benefits tenants would experience from the improvements being carried out, and how the Council's workforce will be empowered to identify and solve issues effectively. It was explained that the stock condition survey would allow the Council to target its investment in the right areas and alleviate tenants having to report regular maintenance issues. Sub-contractors will be brought in to tackle disrepair, damp and mould, batch repairs and larger refurbishments. More resources will be put into frontline staff and IT systems will be upgraded to allow more flexibility, integration and increased capacity for delivering maintenance job appointments. It is also important that any issues relating to anti-social behaviour or safeguarding that are identified during maintenance work can be logged in the system so that they are then automatically flagged in the right areas for action.
- i) The Committee asked how best value was secured from contractors, particularly in the context of local commissioning. It was set out that contractors had been put in place long-term and to minimise travel time, so the majority of contractors used are local. A great deal of effort had been put into finding the right contractors to deliver effective, best value services.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for attending the meeting to present the report and answer the Committee's questions.

Resolved:

- 1) To request that the Committee is informed when the Council is notified of its first inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).**
- 2) To request that information is provided on the outcomes of the 100% stock condition survey of the Council's social housing, once it is completed, and the current and future investment requirements that the results suggest.**
- 3) To recommend that work is carried out as rapidly as possible to ensure that the Council's first inspection assessment rating from the RSH is not adversely affected by 'technical' failures arising as a result of the recent transition of responsibility for social housing from Nottingham City Homes to the Council.**
- 4) To recommend that investment is made in the development of an enhanced IT system to enable the integrated management of issues raised by Council tenants and the efficient planning of work at their homes.**

41 Responses to Recommendations

The Chair presented the latest responses received from the relevant Portfolio Holders to recommendations made previously by the Committee.

The Committee noted the responses of the Portfolio Holders to its recommendations.

42 Work Programme

The Chair presented the Committee's completed Work Programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.

The Committee noted the completed Work Programme.