

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee: 16 October 2023

Response to Recommendations: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Portfolio: Housing

Recommendation	Response
1) That all possible steps are taken to engage with both the Home Office and the Probation Service to seek to receive viable advance notice of upcoming evictions and releases, so that support can be provided in an effective and timely way, and the Portfolio Holder for Housing gives consideration to how the Council and its partners could engage with these Government departments at a national level in relation to the impact of their current eviction/release processes on the ability of Local Authorities to discharge their statutory duties for the prevention and relief of homelessness in an effective way.	<p>A duty to refer is placed on prison and probation services, although it is different for different organisations. The Council has a Prison Navigator post that liaises with prisons. There is also an arm of the Nottingham Private Rented Assistance Scheme that works exclusively with end offenders. There is a weekly multi-agency Release Board meeting regarding the release of prisoners that will require accommodation. The Community Safety team raises the impact of the current eviction and release processes on the Council's statutory homelessness services at the meetings of the Reducing Reoffending Board, and this is also raised regularly with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities advisors and with Probation Services.</p> <p>The Council gets prior notification of National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodation requirements from the Government. The Council has staff who work on these cases, including a new Refugee Specialist.</p>
2) That partnership work is progressed with other local Councils both on where temporary accommodation can be provided effectively and in supporting refugees/asylum seekers to present for housing support within the right local authority area, and consideration is given to what partnership working opportunities in relation to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping might arise as a result of the establishment of the proposed Combined County Authority.	<p>The Council response around NASS notifications is as above. The Council runs the Refugee Resettlement Programme on behalf of the south Nottinghamshire Local Authorities to provide long-term accommodation for refugees. This is fully funded through a ring-fenced Home Office grant. Although the Council receives notice of national accommodation plans and seeks to mitigate the impact of this (led by Community Safety teams), the Government does not usually alter its plans in response to Local Authority concerns. The Council will examine whether this partnership should be extended as the East Midlands Combined County Authority comes into existence. There is an existing East Midlands Councils working group on strategic migration.</p>

	<p>A new hostel opened on 31 January 2024 in Nottingham to accommodate the low needs homeless population, including refugees and those recently granted asylum, plus 20 extra shelter beds for the same group. The Council communicates with partners to encourage people to make claims in the area where they get their decision to remain. Engagement is underway with Derby and Leicester City Councils to discuss opportunities to share learning and work together on homelessness and rough sleeping.</p>
<p>3) That appropriate steps are taken to ensure an effective communications campaign at the community level so that people at risk of homelessness are aware of the Housing Solutions support offer, and winter sit-up services for rough sleepers are as known about and as welcoming as possible.</p>	<p>Housing Solutions attend all multi-agency meetings to inform about available services. The Council also give grants to the Refugee Forum to publicise services provided and who is entitled to them. When cold weather is expected, the Council notifies partners, including the Police and other agencies to let them know about the services on offer so that they can notify anyone who approaches them in need. The Street Outreach team go to every single known location for rough sleepers and let people know that they can have a bed if they want one.</p>
<p>4) That all appropriate steps are taken with partners to ensure the safety of rough sleepers, prioritise support effectively, provide appropriate refuges and combat exploitation.</p>	<p>The Council continues to commission refuges for domestic violence survivors, plus accommodation and support services for rough sleepers (including refugees). The Council strategically plans a system of services that interconnect to meet all support needs, for example, accommodation services are visited by nurses and drug and alcohol support.</p>

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee: 18 December 2023

Response to Recommendations: Housing Strategy Development

Portfolio: Housing

Recommendation	Response
<p>1) That the Housing Strategy sets out a clear definition of what represents affordable housing for Nottingham communities, and that this is embedded within the wider strategic planning for the delivery of genuinely affordable homes.</p>	<p>The Housing Strategy considers the need for affordable housing in ‘Commitment One: Increasing the supply of affordable homes for local people’. Although still in draft, this section defines affordable housing as homes for sale or rent at below open market cost that are for people whose needs are not met by the private market. Further on, the Strategy summarise the need for affordable housing in Nottingham:</p> <p>“The Housing Need Assessment (HNA) found that the evidence points to a clear and acute need for rented affordable housing for lower-income households in Nottingham; a per year need of 921 additional dwellings. This need is predominately led by the demand for social rent as even affordable rent levels were found to be unaffordable to many in housing need.</p> <p>With regards to affordable home ownership (AHO), the HNA found that there is likely to be an adequate supply of homes for sale on the open market that are priced within what would be considered an affordable price band. However, there may be a role for some AHO products to ensure a balance of tenures and to support site viability. It was also recognised that there are some households that struggle to access mortgages and raise capital, so products such as shared ownership could help households overcome this particular barrier to owner occupation.”</p> <p>The HNA looks in detail at a number of current and projected needs, including the need for affordable housing to support evidenced-based development of planning policies. For rented housing, the latest HNA has deemed that to be considered affordable the proportion of income to be</p>

	<p>spent on housing should be 30% or less. At time of calculation (September 2023), the estimated household income to access the private rented market was £34,000. For owner occupation, the HNA assumes a household has a 10% deposit and can secure a mortgage for four times its income. Estimated household income to access home ownership is £33,100. Its notable that the income required to buy in Nottingham is actually slightly lower than the figure to rent.</p> <p>These affordability thresholds are embedded in any calculation to consider the local need for affordable housing. The finding of the HNA will inform the Local Plan and any complementary planning or housing policies developed.</p>
<p>2) That a clear strategic plan is established for the delivery of Nottingham's future new housing and housing retrofit needs, to ensure that the Council is in a strong position to take advantage of funding made available through the East Midlands Combined County Authority as the opportunity arises.</p>	<p>The Housing Strategy sets the overall strategy for the city's ambitions for housing delivery and, alongside the Carbon Neutral 2028 Plan, the overall ambition for the decarbonisation of the city's homes. The action plans that are aligned to these strategic documents give further detail as to how the ambitions will be achieved. Leveraging the opportunities that devolution presents is a key part of this.</p> <p>In the lead-up to the establishment of the East Midlands Combined County Authority (CCA), the Local Authorities within the area have started to work together to prepare for its launch. Subgroups have been set up to develop a pipeline of projects to regenerate brownfield sites to accelerate housing delivery and decarbonise local homes (including retrofit projects). Colleagues from Growth and City Development are part of these subgroups and have submitted proposals for schemes to benefit Nottingham.</p> <p>It is anticipated that Homes England will initially retain its role in funding and supporting the delivery of affordable homes across the region, though the CCA may take fuller control of affordable housing funding budgets at a</p>

	<p>later point. The Housing Strategy team will continue to work with Homes England to maximise this funding stream for Nottingham.</p>
<p>3) That the Selective Licensing Scheme is sustained and developed as part of ensuring a good standard of housing within in the private rented sector.</p>	<p>The following action is in the draft Housing Strategy: “To proactively drive up standards through Additional and Selective Licensing Schemes where the evidence shows they are needed.” This is in line with the powers given to Local Authorities to introduce selective licensing of privately rented homes under the Housing Act 2004.</p>
<p>4) That further consideration is given to how the Council can work as effectively as possible with partners across the wider region to ensure the delivery of Nottingham’s challenging long-term housing targets.</p>	<p>Throughout the development of the emerging Housing Strategy the importance of partnership working has had considerable focus. It is recognised that housing has a wide impact on the city. Homes not only effect the people that live in them, but also the environmental and economic fortunes of Nottingham and beyond. Due to this, many of the levers to achieve the Council’s aims sit outside of its direct remit and improving the city’s homes will require strong partnership working on identified shared goals across the private, public and voluntary and community sectors. The Council will need to collaborate on issues and solutions not just across the city, but regionally and nationally too.</p> <p>Like many Local Authorities around the country, the Council faces significant financial challenges. It will need to deliver and commission services differently and maximise external funding to deliver its vision. Many of the housing and related issues that Nottingham is facing are experienced across the country and cannot be solved in isolation. National Government will play a significant part in supporting Local Authorities to achieve their housing ambitions, including the development of national housing policy and providing vital funding.</p> <p>The incoming East Midlands Combined County Authority will bring about a new framework for regional collaboration and this Strategy helps make sure the city is well placed to benefit from the devolution of housing-</p>

	<p>related powers and funding from central Government that have been set out in the Devolution Deal. The Council and its partners have a strong track record of attracting investment both private and public and will continue to bid for available funding to help address the city's housing issues. The development of the Strategy has involved collaboration with partners and a strong partnership with key stakeholders across the city is envisioned to drive progress forward.</p>
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Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee: 22 January 2024
Response to Recommendations: Asset Rationalisation – Delivery and Future Strategy
Portfolio: Skills, Growth, Economic Development and Property

Recommendation	Response
<p>1) That consideration is given to how the current staffing structure supporting the Asset Rationalisation Programme could be developed further to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ensure strong recruitment and retention for the sustainable delivery of the Programme; b) develop interim and graduate posts into full-time roles wherever possible and appropriate; and c) attract students from local universities into appropriate graduate roles. 	<p>The Strategic Assets and Property team are working with Human Resources colleagues to develop new advertising methods and outlets to increase applications into the team. Recent success has been achieved by converting one interim post to a permanent post and by promoting an existing employee into a more senior role. Across the other teams, two interim staff have been converted to permanent with a third being promoted.</p> <p>At present, the recruitment market remains challenging and the likelihood of achieving permanent recruitment across all posts remains low. The Disposals and Development Team Leader role will be advertised shortly on a permanent basis and the results will be presented back to the Committee, as appropriate. The Council is working with local universities on graduate and year-out roles within the team and a candidate has recently been offered a permanent position in the Corporate Portfolio and Investment team.</p>
<p>2) That the drafting process for the Strategic Asset Plan gives due consideration to how the Council could sustainably maintain and develop community assets going forward, where viable.</p>	<p>The Strategic Asset Plan (SAP) will fully consider the requirements of the Council's Improvement Plan and Strategic Plans. The SAP will also ensure community assets meet with the Council's best value requirements. The SAP will be a continually evolving document that will respond to the Council's changing requirements.</p>
<p>3) That consideration is given to how communities and ward councillors can be engaged with fully and effectively during the disposal process for a local community asset, to ensure that there is</p>	<p>The Council formally adopted its Community Assets Policy in February 2023. The Policy recognises the positive impact that can be achieved through the transfer of assets to the community in certain circumstances. The default position of the Policy is that property will always be let at</p>

opportunity for a community solution to be found for the local asset to be continued.

market rents, but with those rents being discounted in an agreed amount to reflect the value of social outputs generated for as long as they continue to be delivered. In parallel to the adoption of the Policy, a social value calculator has been developed that forms the basis for assessing any potential rental discount.

Due to the current financial challenges facing the Council (including the significant budget reductions that are being proposed for the next financial year and the Government appointment of Commissioners to the Council), circumstances have changed materially in the short term since the adoption of the Policy so the approach to community asset transfer, and the terms of any transfers, have to be reflective of the current challenges facing the Council.

The Policy excludes consideration of those assets identified for capital or revenue income purposes and it is inevitable that, going forward, there will be a need to dispose of assets to generate capital to fund vital Council services. However, in the event that a property is no longer needed to deliver Council services directly, but is identified as a potential property for community service delivery, then these properties will be advertised through an expression of interest process to potential community tenants, in line with the Policy.

Going forward, the Council will not be able to retain any repairing liabilities and any leases granted will need to be on a full repairing basis by the tenant. Similarly, the Council will be unable to make any other financial contributions to the running of the buildings. It will be vitally important that community organisations wishing to take on assets can demonstrate their financial robustness, both for the present and the future, to take on the running and maintenance costs of the asset transferred. The Council recognises the value of community-based assets remaining in community

control and will work with groups to make this happen where it can, but this has to be within the current financial context.

The Strategic Assets and Property team is mindful of its capacity challenges so, whilst it will continue to explore potential asset transfer with communities where considered appropriate, there does need to be a realistic approach to managing expectations (and the volume of asset transfer requests) accordingly. Given that only limited resources are available to the Council, the initial focus will need to be in dealing with the required asset rationalisation and regularisation of existing occupations.

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee: 19 February 2024

Response to Recommendations: Council Tenant Engagement

Portfolio: Housing

Recommendation	Response
1) That the statistics in relation to the themes and resolution of tenant complaints is fed into the proposed Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Structure at the appropriate point, to help identify and address wider issues in a collaborative way to improve the experience of all tenants.	The Housing Assurance Board (HAB) will be provided with detailed insight for analysis from Housing Services complaints, customer feedback, tenant satisfaction surveys, service requests, customer journey mapping and mystery shopper exercises. This insight will be scrutinised by the HAB to assist with its decision-making and influence on the prioritisation of areas/services to be selected for further detailed review by resident Service Improvement Groups (SIG) utilising a task-and-finish-style approach. The outcomes of these detailed reviews will be presented back to the HAB by the nominated lead and members of the SIG.
2) That particular consideration is given to how younger and working tenants can be supported in participating effectively in the proposed Involvement Structure, and how the types, styles and timings of participation options can be made engaging and accessible to them.	Through the delivery of the Involvement Structure, flexible, accessible and inclusive opportunities will be provided to ensure that residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds are able to have their say, be actively listened to and be able to influence decision-making at a time and in a way that meets their needs and availability. The Council will consult and engage with residents either directly, through third-party community groups or local partners to ensure it is aware of and able to break down barriers to accessing opportunities to influence service improvement and decision-making.
3) That it is ensured that tenants can engage with Housing Patch Managers easily and accessibly, and that the Patch Managers are trained and supported in delivering the proposed Involvement Structure effectively at the local level.	The Tenant Involvement team works collaboratively with Housing Patch Managers across city. Work is already under way to review, train and improve Housing Patch Managers and other Housing Services colleagues to further develop the skills and knowledge required to ensure that they are meaningfully and effectively involved in resident involvement, engagement and consultation – ensuring accessibility and transparency with residents at all times at a local level.

