

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 30 September 2024 from 2:00pm to 3:39pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Sarita-Marie Rehman-Wall
(Chair)
Councillor Michael Savage (Vice Chair)
Councillor Kevin Clarke
Councillor David Mellen
Councillor Samina Riaz

Absent

Councillor Sam Harris
Councillor AJ Matsiko
Councillor Adele Williams

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Anne-Marie Barclay - Senior Project Manager
Chris Carter - Head of Transport Strategy
Councillor Jay Hayes - Executive Member for Housing and Planning
Nicki Jenkins - Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development
Councillor Neghat Khan - Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategic Regeneration, Transport and Communications
Mark Lowe - Head of Housing and Regeneration
Dan Lucas - Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager
Adrian Mann - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer
Paul Seddon - Director of Planning and Transport
Ruth Stallwood - Housing Strategy Specialist
Damon Stanton - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer

16 Apologies for Absence

Councillor AJ Matsiko - work commitments
Councillor Adele Williams - work commitments

17 Declarations of Interests

None

18 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2024 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

19 Transforming Cities Programme

Councillor Neghat Khan, Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategic Regeneration, Transport and Communications; Nicki Jenkins, Interim Corporate

Director for Growth and City Development; Paul Seddon, Director of Planning and Transport; Chris Carter, Head of Transport Strategy; and Anne-Marie Barclay, Senior Project Manager, presented a report on the ongoing delivery and outcomes to date of the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) Programme. The following points were raised:

- a) The TCF is targeted at urban areas for investment in sustainable transport and infrastructure. The wider objectives of the TCF Programme are to support regeneration, improve connectivity, support housing growth, reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. Nottingham City and Derby City were the only Local Authorities to secure the highest amount of funding available from the TCF, in recognition of the quality of the funding bid and their delivery record on local transport projects.
- b) Nottingham and Derby submitted a joint bid with Nottinghamshire County Council where £161.7 million of funding was achieved, with Nottingham securing £92.6 million. The main elements of the bid included developing city centre connectivity, strategic connectivity between employment sites and urban growth corridors between Nottingham and Derby. To the end of August 2024, £119.1 million has been spent overall and a further £16.5 million committed. Nottingham has spent £71.1 million, with a further £3.8 million committed – and 21 out of the 33 Nottingham schemes have been completed.
- c) Projects within the city centre focussed on regeneration within the Broad Marsh area and connectivity to the train station. Improvements have been made on Carrington Street, Colin Street and Sussex Street. There is now a cross-city centre cycle route and work has been done to develop public transport infrastructure such as enhancements to the Victoria Centre bus station, a new bus lane on the Cinderhill roundabout, signal upgrades along key transport corridors and road upgrades to facilitate larger capacity buses. Upgrades have also been made to real-time public transport information and ticketing processes.
- d) Investments have been made into active travel infrastructure, including cycle route improvements and 31km of new or upgraded cycle lanes across the city, with further segregation from traffic and enhanced quiet routes in green spaces. An e-bike hire scheme has been introduced commercially since June 2023 and the TCF has been used to grow sustainable travel with 81 electric vehicle charge points installed in the Broad Marsh multi-storey car park and an additional 70 charge point sockets across the wider D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership area. Workplace travel grants are available to employers to put in small-scale measures at their sites to encourage greener travel, such as charging points or cycle storage.
- e) A number of additional schemes are yet to be started, such as the Thane Road bus lane that is due to commence next month, and the new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Trent, which has secured Planning permission and is due to be completed by Spring 2026.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- f) The Committee asked what progress had been made with a new park and ride development on Mansfield Road. It was explained that the planned new park and

ride was outside the City Council area. Unfortunately, the project has been withdrawn from the current TCF Programme as Nottinghamshire County Council considered the costs to be too high for delivery in the current timescales. However, the project may be returned to in future bids.

- g) The Committee asked how the ongoing maintenance of new green spaces would be funded in a sustainable way, going forward. It was reported that the Council has a fund for the maintenance of green spaces that have been developed as part of the TCF Programme. Work is being done to identify how Section 106 funding from Planning agreements with developers in relation to the Broad Marsh could be used to support the city's Green Heart.
- h) The Committee asked how the e-bike infrastructure was planned and managed to limit nuisance to residents due to inconsiderate parking. It was explained that the Council is aware of poor parking practices and is working to enforce better parking discipline, such as through fines that can be issued via the app. The Council provides and manages the infrastructure for the e-bikes, which is sufficiently flexible for facilities like parking stations to be moved (in consultation with Ward Councillors). The Council contracts the provision of the e-bike service to an independent operator, with the Council then receiving an income.
- i) The Committee asked what benefits the TCF Programme was bringing to the Nottingham economy and supporting local growth. It was reported that many of the projects delivered directly by the Council used local contractors where appropriate in the context of ensuring best value and so benefited Nottingham businesses. The investment in the transport infrastructure is designed to have economic benefits including allowing easier travel access to jobs and regenerating areas to promote private sector investment.
- j) The Committee asked how the outcomes of the TCF Programme were being monitored. It was set out that delivery of the TCF projects is still ongoing but that, once they are all concluded, the Council will be gathering extensive data to assess the outcomes and impacts as part of a required reporting process.
- k) The Committee asked how the transport network could be developed further, including through greater integration with the rail network. It was reported that the Council has a strong record in the delivery of good public transport and infrastructure projects, so the new East Midlands Combined County Authority presents further opportunities for achieving transport and infrastructure investment in Nottingham. Work is also being done to develop carbon neutrality targets across the wider area.

The Chair thanked the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategic Regeneration, Transport and Communications, the Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development, the Director of Planning and Transport, the Head of Transport Strategy, and the Senior Project Manager for attending the meeting to present the report and answer the Committee's questions.

Resolved:

- 1) To request that further information is provided on the development of the monitoring approach that will be used to assess the impact and outcomes of the projects delivered as part of the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) Programme on increasing the usage of public transport and active transport across the city.**
- 2) To request that further information is provided on the planning being done to ensure the long-term, sustainable maintenance of the green space delivered as part of the TCF Programme.**
- 3) To request that the traffic flow along Queen's Road (as part of the Southern Relief Route) is reviewed with Traffic colleagues to seek to alleviate as much congestion as possible caused by right-turning vehicles.**
- 4) To recommend that the Council considers how it can maximise the effectiveness of its engagement with the East Midlands Combined County Authority and associated Local Authority partners on the future development and delivery of transport infrastructure schemes across the wider area that will bring important benefits to Nottingham people.**

20 Homes Fit for the Future - Consultation and Findings

Councillor Jay Hayes, Executive Member for Housing and Planning; Nicki Jenkins, Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development; Paul Seddon, Director of Planning and Regeneration; Mark Lowe, Head of Housing and Regeneration; Dan Lucas, Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager; and Ruth Stallwood, Housing Strategy Specialist, presented a report on the outcomes of the public consultation on the 'Homes Fit for the Future' draft Housing Strategy and how these have influenced the Strategy's further development. The following points were raised:

- a) A six-week consultation on the draft, all-tenures Housing Strategy was launched and 145 responses were returned, with the overall feedback being positive. Consultation processes have been at the forefront of developing the Strategy with a number of engagement events being held prior to the public consultation, including discussions with the Nottingham City Health and Wellbeing Board and the Social Housing Forum. The public consultation was launched and a broad range of stakeholders were engaged with including private landlords, social housing developers, tenants and the community and voluntary sector.
- b) Overall, 80% of respondents agreed that the Strategy had outlined the most pressing housing issues in the city. Respondents also put forward issues that they believed should be considered as one of the city's most pressing housing issues, with the top priorities being student accommodation, the suitability of housing developments, the cost of private sector rents and tenant security. There were 70% of respondents who agreed with the Strategy's vision statement, but they suggested that more engagement could be done with citizens and noted that the vision needed to be achievable. Comments from those who disagreed with the vision statement raised a need for more help for homeowners to achieve higher property standards and concerns about the density of population in the city.

- c) There are 14 key actions within the Strategy and respondents were asked which would have the most impact in achieving its vision. The top priorities were bringing empty homes back into use; preventing homelessness and rough sleeping; supporting the development of affordable homes; improving neighbourhoods, homes and services for tenants; ensuring homes within the private rented sector are high quality, sustainable and secure; and supporting regeneration and economic growth. Other key actions that would help the vision were put forward and these included influencing central Government policy and regulating and supporting the private rented sector.
- d) There were comments from a number of key stakeholders surrounding partnership opportunities, which included integrating carbon net zero goals and reviewing the Council's own systems, processes and policies to aid partnership working. There were, however, a number of challenges raised, which included housing delivery limitations and private rented sector provision.
- e) There have been a number of updates to the Strategy as a result of the consultation, which included amending the detail in some of the commitments to make them clearer, developing the section on student housing and altering the section on the private rented sector and affordable housing delivery to give more clarity on the Council's objectives. The finalised Strategy is due to go to the Executive Board for approval in October. There will be an Implementation Plan to sit alongside the Strategy and the delivery of the strategic objectives will be monitored against this across the Strategy's four-year period.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- f) The Committee asked how the consultation had been targeted to reach the people that the Council needed to hear from most. It was explained that use had been made of Council tenant distribution lists and lists of people who had expressed interest in receiving such correspondence from the Council. There was some specific engagement with housing providers, however, the majority of respondents were returned from general members of the public.
- g) The Committee asked how the Strategy approached the future needs for student housing. It was reported that students represent a large population in the city and that it is important there is adequate accommodation for them, as not providing this could affect the availability of family housing in the private rented sector. This policy approach is rooted into the Local Plan, with work taking place with local universities and developers to support purpose-built student accommodation. The growth in student numbers has been significant, though the Council has been able to keep pace with the increase, mitigating cost inflation for family houses.
- h) There has been a reduction in new student numbers in recent years due to a number of factors including Government policies, the Coronavirus Pandemic and the UK's departure from the European Union. However, this has meant that purpose-built student accommodation can house more second and third-year students, easing some of the demand on the private rented sector. The Council continues to monitor the number of students in Nottingham, including through a survey of purpose-built student accommodation to assess vacancy levels. There

is a strong potential pipeline of developments if needed, and the Council shares its monitoring data with developers.

- i) The Committee asked how suitable levels of social and affordable housing would be delivered, particularly in the context of supporting the most vulnerable – including people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. It was set out that a new Homelessness Prevention Strategy is currently in draft form, which will aim to encompass all of the measures that the Council is using to support residents into accommodation to try to prevent homelessness. Demand is outpacing supply in regards to the availability of social housing and that there has been a contraction in the delivery of new housing in the sector. There is a reliance on partner Housing Associations to help deliver more affordable housing, and the Council is doing all it can to increase its own stock – which includes both buying and building new social housing. The new Government has removed some financial constraints to enable the Council to do build more new houses and replace outgoing housing stock through the Right to Buy scheme.
- j) The Committee asked what more could be done to develop relationships with Housing Associations to achieve the delivery of more social and affordable housing. It was explained that the Council has good relationships with local Housing Associations, which provide a substantial amount of homes within the city. The Nottingham Social Housing Forum was re-launched last year to seek to build stronger connections with providers, with the draft Housing Strategy being presented to the Forum. The Council will also work closely with the Forum to seek to address the main issues that can arise for tenants with their Housing Association. However, this is currently not full consistency in the regulatory requirements across the entirety of the social housing sector, which can create some challenges.
- k) The Committee asked what outcomes of the public consultation had been least expected. It was reported that respondents had outlined private house standing empty in the city as a significant problem. There are around 1,500 private homes in the city that have been empty for 6 months or longer. The Council does take proactive steps to reduce the number of empty homes such as charging higher levels of Council Tax, with some reactive work when empty homes become a nuisance for residents such as being an area of focus for anti-social behaviour. However, the Council does not have statutory duties in this area, where activity can be time-consuming and current resources are limited. The powers that the Council has for compulsory intervention are also limited and potentially expensive. However, the Council is doing all it can to turning around empty properties within its own stock as quickly as possible, which includes significant investment in suitable contractors.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Housing and Planning, the Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development, the Director of Planning and Regeneration, the Head of Housing and Regeneration, the Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager, and the Housing Strategy Specialist for attending the meeting to present the report and answer the Committee's questions.

Resolved:

- 1) To request that further information is provided on the current demand for and occupation of dedicated student accommodation in the city, and the work being done to project and plan for the future demand.**
- 2) To request that details are provided on the current number of Council homes that have been vacant for more than 6 months, and the work being done to bring these back into occupancy.**
- 3) To recommend that the Council works to maximise its engagement with all Registered Providers in the social housing sector active in the city, both to ensure the effective delivery of locally affordable housing and to support tenants in resolving any issues with Housing Association landlords.**
- 4) To recommend that all possible action is carried out to bring void Council-owned social housing back into use as quickly as possible, as part of the Council leading by example on returning empty housing in the city back into occupation.**
- 5) To recommend that the Council considers how it could engage effectively with its partners and with the Government on the development of a standardisation of regulation across Registered Providers in the social housing sector, to help deliver a consistency of experience for social tenants.**

21 Responses to Recommendations

The Chair presented the latest responses received from the Executive to recommendations made to it previously by the Committee.

The Committee noted the responses of the Executive to its recommendations.

22 Work Programme

The Chair presented the Committee's current Work Programme for the 2024/25 municipal year. The following points were discussed:

- a) The Committee felt that a future item for scrutiny could be to consider how the Council works in partnership with other Housing Associations in the city to ensure the provision of the right level of suitable social and affordable housing in Nottingham. The Committee also noted that work was underway to understand how the Council provides Supported Living, as part of scoping a potential future item.
- b) The Committee noted that the Regulator of Social Housing would be carrying out a formal inspection of the Council's Housing Services shortly, so the outcomes of the Regulator's report will be brought for review to the appropriate meeting of the Committee.

The Committee noted the Work Programme.