

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held in the Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on Wednesday 4 September 2019 from 2:00pm to 4:22pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Anne Peach (Chair)
Councillor Carole McCulloch (Vice Chair, items 16-19)
Councillor Georgia Power (Vice Chair, items 19-21)
Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Maria Joannou
Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis
Councillor Jane Lakey
Councillor Ethan Radford
Councillor Andrew Rule
Councillor Cate Woodward

Absent

Councillor Sue Johnson
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Ian Bentley	- Strategy and Commissioning Manager
Rachael Harding	- Housing Strategy Specialist
Bobby Lowen	- Commissioning Lead
Tajinder Madahar	- Head of Extensive and Specialist Services
Adrian Mann	- Governance Officer
Christine Oliver	- Head of Commissioning
Kimberley Pike	- Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator
Laura Wilson	- Senior Governance Officer
Councillor Linda Woodings	- Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Heritage

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan - Council business

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

In relation to items 19 and 20, in the interests of transparency, Councillor Jane Lakey stated that she is a private landlord in the City and derives income from the leasing of property.

18 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2019 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

19 UPDATE FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING, PLANNING AND HERITAGE

Councillor Linda Woodings, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Heritage, gave a verbal report on her main priorities and challenges for the 2019/20 municipal year. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the budget for the next financial year is under consideration and processes are in place to ensure that the spending in this financial year adheres to the budget;
- (b) a submission will be made to the Government in support of abolishing the use of the 'no-fault' Section 21 notice, which landlords can use to evict tenants on an assured shorthold tenancy without the requirement to provide a specific reason for taking back possession of the property;
- (c) after the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety following the Grenfell Tower disaster, the Council will ensure full compliance with its statutory responsibilities across its housing stock, and that the right fire safety measures are in place. The cladding of some high-rise buildings is being replaced. New sprinkler systems are being rolled out across all Council homes (starting with the high-rise buildings most at risk) and repair teams are assessing the fire safety and repair works required. The important work of the Safer Housing Team will be discussed at a future meeting;
- (d) the Council is committed to building 1000 more social homes and the development of brownfield sites is being explored, with potential funding applications to Homes England. A consultation on the Social Housing Allocation Policy is underway and the returns will be used to inform the final version of the document. Nottingham City Homes (NCH), which is celebrating 100 years of Council housing, is moving to a new governance structure with a strategic group board, to represent the voice of the tenants and act as a risk management, compliance and audit board. The Partnership Agreement between NCH and the Council will also be reviewed. Work is underway to explore what assistance can be given to struggling NCH tenants to help them avoid going into rent arrears;
- (e) the Land and Planning Policies document (LAPP), which represents Part 2 of the new Local Plan, contains policies to guide the development of Nottingham and identifies sites for development and for protection. Its current version is undergoing consultation, for final presentation to the Council for adoption at its November meeting. A number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), including documents on Open Space, Biodiversity and Caves, are being drafted in support of the LAPP. These SPDs add further detail to policies and provide additional guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. SPDs are also being considered for other areas, such as for achieving 0% net carbon emissions, and the balance to be struck in building redevelopment between the needs for new student accommodation and affordable family housing;
- (f) revised plans on access to minerals and waste disposal are going forward, and a number of public rights of way are being formalised. A new Local List of heritage

assets is being created and further grants for Heritage Action Zones in the City (which may be expanded) are being sought, to ensure that Nottingham's historic structures and environments have additional protection and can be developed sensitively to serve a practical and sustainable purpose, going forward;

- (g) applications for the development of Houses in Multiple Occupation are managed by both Planning Officers and the Safer Housing Team, who ensure that the minimum space standards are adhered to and that there is adequate waste disposal, storage and parking provision in place. Work is also being carried out to ensure that natural water drainage is maintained across Nottingham wherever possible, to reduce the contribution of water running off hard surfaces to flooding;
- (h) close attention is paid to the value of the Section 106 Agreements negotiated with developers (with reviews carried out every twelve months), in consultation with the District Valuer, to ensure that the right amount is invested in local community facilities and infrastructure when new developments are built.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) request that the roll-out timetable is provided for the installation of new sprinkler systems across the Council's housing stock;**
- (2) request that information is provided on how the number of parking spaces appropriate for a new housing development is calculated and agreed by Planning Officers.**

20 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

Rachael Harding (Housing Strategy Specialist), Tajinder Madahar (Head of Extensive and Specialist Services), Christine Oliver (Head of Commissioning) and Kimberley Pike (Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator) presented a report on homelessness and rough sleeping in Nottingham, including the work of Housing Aid. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the Government has announced extra funding for addressing homelessness, but it may be that funds must be bid for on a project basis, so an assessment is being made of any current gaps in service provision. As Government financial support for homelessness has reduced by over £21million between 2010 and 2019 (representing a funding cut of 53% across the East Midlands), with the £6.98million available split £4.1million for Homelessness and £2.88million for Adult Social Care, Housing Aid has a very high and challenging caseload;
- (b) levels of homelessness have risen, nationally. Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, a new monitoring regime is in place, which captures a wider range of data. The Act introduced a duty to support all households that come to Housing Aid, so the number of households that the Council is required to support more than doubled between 2017 and 2018. Officers now have much more contact with struggling households over a longer period of time, and the primary strategy is to seek to prevent homelessness through early intervention;

- (c) the main two reasons for homelessness are eviction from a rented property, or being asked to leave the property of parents or a relative. These have been the primary reasons for some years, though the number of people becoming homeless following eviction from rented property has increased in recent years. An assessment of the current Local Housing Allowance (LHA) relative to existing rent levels suggests that only a very limited number of properties would be affordable to somebody reliant on the LHA. Nottingham City Homes (NCH) has Tenancy Sustainment Officers to offer support, while schemes are in place to provide access to skills and improve employability. Engagement is underway with private landlords through dedicated liaison officers to encourage and support them in taking on tenants on Universal Credit;
- (d) where people are asked to leave the property of their parents or a relative, a home visit and assessment takes place and a personalised housing plan is agreed to help people resolve their situation and live independently, in consultation with an employment adviser where appropriate. Mediation services are also available. Particular efforts are made to protect any child at risk of homelessness and being taken into the Council's care;
- (e) the Committee requested information on the groups of people most at risk of homelessness, and on what was being done to address their particular needs. It felt that, given the limited possibilities for renting in the private sector on the basis of the LHA, there is a clear need for social housing, and that there should be an appropriate social housing element in housing development schemes;
- (f) the Council seeks to ensure that 20% of the housing stock in new developments constitutes affordable housing, and that part of the income from the associated Section 106 Agreement is invested in NCH. However, there is no Government funding available to Local Authorities to build social housing – which can only fund housing projects by borrowing against their own rental incomes. Houses built by the Council are subject to 'Right to Buy' and the income received by the Council for a sale through this scheme is not enough to construct a replacement house for social housing – though, sometimes, the Council can purchase appropriate existing houses to use for social housing. Consideration is being given to whether NCH could establish a Housing Association arm to access housing development funding, but it would need to self-fund any house-building projects;
- (g) many individuals and families – though not all – come to the Council before they lose their home. Although the Council attempts to prevent homelessness from occurring, this has only been possible in around one-third of cases. This is because successful prevention depends upon when a person at risk of homelessness approaches the Council, and the willingness of any evicting party to engage in negotiation, financial or otherwise. Unfortunately, the relief funding associated with the Homelessness Reduction Act is not enough to keep all people at risk of homelessness in formal accommodation;
- (h) there is a high demand for temporary accommodation in the City, which has increased over recent years and is now at a peak level, with 277 households in temporary accommodation currently, compared to 54 in 2009. Although a lower proportion of households at risk of homelessness require temporary accommodation ultimately, families placed in temporary homes tend to need to

stay in them for longer periods before a more permanent solution is found. This can be due to a lack of affordable housing and the requirement of the Homelessness Reduction Act that people must spend 56 days seeking accommodation in the private rented sector before they can be offered a Council house;

- (i) the Committee noted that people who enter temporary accommodation often need to move into what is available at a particular time, wherever it is in the City. This can mean that families with children move out of the catchment areas of their schools, and they cannot necessarily meet the costs of the public transport required for their children to get to school. It advised that the current policy of meeting the travel costs of a child between their school and their temporary accommodation for six months only is reviewed and the cost implications of funding a child's travel for the full period of their temporary accommodation is assessed for affordability;
- (j) there is a £4.1million housing-related support services budget for 2019/20, including over 400 units of supported accommodation for singles and families, an independent living support service to help families and individuals sustain their tenancies, a Street Outreach and Enablement Service for rough sleepers, and the Housing Aid core service and homelessness strategy. A loan has been made to NCH to deliver at least 50 units of suitable family housing for temporary accommodation per year over three years, and £472,487 has been invested in 31 refuge spaces for survivors of domestic or sexual violence, with an additional £66,407 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support six further refuge beds;
- (k) for 2019/20, the Government has allocated a £600,000 Flexible Homeless Support Grant to fund flexible prevention activity, additional staffing capacity within Housing Aid service and additional temporary accommodation for families and singles, and a £165,000 New Burdens Grant, to fund IT for monitoring of the Homelessness Reduction Act, additional staffing capacity within the Housing Aid service and start-up costs for the NCH Private Sector Leasing Scheme for temporary accommodation;
- (l) the Council has also put in successful bids for a £245,000 Private Rented Access Scheme Grant to expand the existing private rented sector scheme based at Housing Aid into a social lettings service; a £690,000 Rapid Rehousing Pathway Grant to deliver the sit-up service, navigators, private rented sector access and tenancy support for rough sleepers; and a £460,000 Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant to fund the rough sleeper coordinator, winter shelter, complex needs hostel, housing first / move on, 'No First Night Out' and resettlement workers. However, there is high competition for these funds and the bidding process is time-intensive for officers. Given that the grants can only be used for pre-specified purposes and have a short time limit for spending, they are not an effective model for sustainable service provision in the long term;
- (m) 635 individuals were sleeping rough at some stage during 2018, with 55 identified at the August 2019 Street Count. These people were found in 33 locations across nine wards, with the majority within the City Centre – though more people are now

moving to the City's outskirts. There are 292 known locations across the City that are checked regularly by the Street Outreach Team;

- (n) in December 2018, the Office for National Statistics produced a report based on experimental statistics looking at deaths of homeless people in England and Wales since 2013. This data showed an increase of 24% in deaths from 2013 to 2017 – 84% were male (at an average age of 44). Of these deaths, 32% were due to a drug overdose, 10% were alcohol-related and 13% were suicides. Overall, drug overdoses and alcohol-related deaths have increased, while suicides have decreased. In Nottingham, four rough sleeper deaths have been reported in the last 12 months. One in three people who die when rough sleeping have long-term mental health conditions;
- (o) the current key challenges are that, in a period of ongoing austerity, there is limited affordable housing available, cuts to supporting infrastructure has reduced that capacity to deliver meaningful homelessness prevention, and the conditions of grant funding do not allow the use of bed-and-breakfasts as temporary accommodation, so it is difficult to fulfil the 'No First Night Out' programme. The probable gap between service demand and available provision is being forecast, but it is challenging to ensure that there is enough investment in prevention and a sufficient stock of temporary accommodation. Plans are in place, but it is difficult to achieve the necessary level of funding to achieve them.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) request that information is provided on the reasons why 47% of people at risk from homelessness during 2018 was due to their being asked to leave the home of their parents or other relatives, and what the particular outcomes of these cases were;**
- (2) request that information is provided on the groups of people most at risk of homelessness, and on what is being done to address their particular needs;**
- (3) recommend that the provision of school travel costs for children for the full duration of their time in temporary accommodation is assessed and provided;**
- (4) request that information on the cost definition for 'affordable housing' is provided, relative to the average family incomes in the Nottingham area.**

21 WORK PROGRAMME

Laura Wilson, Senior Governance Officer, presented the proposed work programme for the 2019/20 municipal year.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) request a written response to the recommendation made the by the Committee at its July 2019 meeting that, after the next Nottingham Citizen Survey (which will be carried out in the context of the revised ward boundaries), following surveys are carried out every other year, in**

conjunction with any other surveys that can be procured as part of the same package, as a cost-saving measure, and that any further cost-saving measures should be explored in relation to the Citizen, be submitted to the November meeting;

- (2) add consultation to changes to Council policy to the work programme, after discussions have taken place with the Chair and Constitutional Services on whether a sub-group can be established to carry out the initial evidence-gathering process;**
- (3) schedule a review of the work to combat Hate Crime for the January 2020 meeting.**