

## BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

# HOMES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1400 hours on Thursday 23 November 2023, Committee Room 6, Council  
House  
Minutes

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### **Present:**

Councillor Mohammed Idrees (Chair)

Councillors: Ziaul Islam, Lauren Rainbow, Rinkal Shergill, Ron Storer, Penny Wagg and Ken Wood

### **Also Present:**

Jayne Bowles, Scrutiny Officer

Guy Chaundy, Assistant Director, Housing Strategy and Enabling

Wayne Davies, Director, Asset Management

Stephen Gabriel, Director, Housing Management

Andrew Healey, Finance Business Partner, Housing

Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing

Stephen Philpott, Director, Housing Solutions and Support Service

Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

## **1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Public-I microsite and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

## **2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Saqib Khan.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Members were reminded they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting.

No interests were declared.

#### **4. MINUTES**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023 be confirmed as correct and signed by the Chair.

#### **5. ACTION TRACKER**

The Committee noted that a response had been received to the outstanding action from the October meeting in relation to Housing Revenue Account and Temporary Accommodation rent collection figures.

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the action tracker be noted.

#### **6. COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA**

The Committee noted that there were no comments from the Commissioner on the agenda.

#### **7. SCRUTINY OF DELIVERY OF 2023/24 BUDGET SAVINGS**

Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing; Guy Chaundy, Assistant Director, Housing Strategy and Enabling; Wayne Davies, Director, Asset Management; Stephen Gabriel, Director, Housing Management; Andrew Healey, Finance Business Partner, Housing, and Stephen Philpott, Director, Housing Solutions and Support Service, were in attendance for this item.

The Chair introduced the report and updated the Committee on the work being undertaken by the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. The Chair undertook to keep the Committee informed.

During the discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the main points included:

**Current Position on Delivery of Savings:** The Committee was informed that there were pressures on both the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund. There were increased expectations regarding the overall level of savings required, not only in terms of generating additional savings, but also bringing savings forward.

It was noted that significant progress had been made, but that it was incredibly difficult to balance the needs of the service and the residents of the city against such a scale of saving.

Housing had generated savings proposals in the order of 17-20% (20% of the controllable budget being £5m) and this was a mix of staffing and non-staffing savings.

There would be a need to reduce the headcount whilst trying to minimise the impact on services supporting the most vulnerable.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the impact on staff morale and reassurance was given that regular communication sessions were being held. Staff remained focussed on delivering the best service for residents. It was noted that prevention rates in housing need and homelessness had risen, averaging around 50% which was at, if not above, the national average.

Investment in Housing Stock: In terms of the Housing Revenue Account, there would be a need to create efficiencies. There was a plan to invest over £1.4b in the 60,000 homes across the city over the next seven to eight years and the Committee noted the importance of strong income streams to support the level of borrowing required to deliver that investment programme.

The proposal was to take a final version of the plan and also the Asset Management Strategy to Cabinet in January.

The Committee noted that in the current financial year investment had more or less doubled compared to 2022/23 and the Asset Management Strategy would set out what the Council wanted to achieve over the next 5 years.

In terms of prioritising investment, this was being done through three areas:

- Data currently held – reference was made to a previous discussion at Committee on the requirement to increase stock condition surveys and the information held on homes.
- Feedback from staff, stakeholders, housing management and technical teams.
- Sharing the programme with contractors for comment.

It was confirmed that as the investment programme was developed, the aim was to share information with ward councillors and Housing Liaison Boards so they would be aware of what was happening in their local areas.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

## **8. WORK PROGRAMME**

Councillor Ken Wood, Chair of the Task and Finish Group, updated the Committee on the Improving Standards of Council Homes Inquiry. It was noted that the inquiry would focus on Voids Standards.

The Committee agreed the new focus for the inquiry and the commencement of evidence-gathering in December and noted that a revised Terms of Reference would be brought to Committee in January.

The Work Programme was discussed, and it was agreed:

- The December meeting would be cancelled and evidence-gathering for the Voids Standards Inquiry would commence.
- Contractor Performance would be included in the Regulatory Compliance report to Committee in January.
- The next Exempt Accommodation Tracking Report would be scheduled for the February meeting.

- A report on Affordable Housing would also be scheduled for February.

**RESOLVED:**

- That the revised focus of the Inquiry be agreed.
- That the work programme be agreed.

**9. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that, as the meeting scheduled for Thursday 21 December 2023 would be cancelled, the next meeting would be on Thursday 25 January 2024.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee noted the date of the next meeting on Thursday 25 January at 1400 hours in Committee Room 6.

**10. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

None.

**11. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**12. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS**

**RESOLVED:**

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

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The meeting ended at 1435 hours.