

Time Commenced – 6.00pm

Time finished – 7.19pm

Communities, Public Protection and Housing Scrutiny Review Board
27 November 2023

Present: Councillor Eyre (Chair)
Councillors C Ingall, Chambers, Kaur, Onuoha, Pandey, Fowke
Also present: Councillor P Ingall

In Attendance: Dawn Deakin – Service Manager for Housing Standards
John Sadler - Head of Estates and Property Review

16/23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received for Councillor Dhindsa.

17/23 Late items introduced by the Chair

There were none.

18/23 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Eyre informed members of the Board that he had been the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Place and Tourism from October 2021 to May 2023.

19/23 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

20/23 Asset Rationalisation Update

The Board received a report and presentation on the Council's Asset Rationalisation Programme. This was presented by the Head of Estates and Property Review.

The Board noted that the Asset Rationalisation Programme was established in the Autumn of 2022. It was reported that by rationalising the buildings the Council held, the program was tasked to deliver a range of outcomes including:

- financial savings,
- optimising the use of property assets,
- enhancing demand management and supporting more efficient and effective partnership working

It was reported that the Programme was controlled through the Asset Rationalisation Board and that the Asset Rationalisation Board reported to the Council's Delivery Board. It was noted that the Asset Rationalisation Board was chaired by Emily Feenan - Director of Corporate Governance, Property and Procurement and Monitoring Officer. It was noted that membership included the s151 Officer and various service Directors from across the Council.

It was reported that on 14 June 2023 Council Cabinet had recognised that the Council House was an underutilised asset and had supported delivery of Phase 1 of the Council House Optimization Strategy. It was noted that the Phase 1 vision was a Health and Social Care Hub on the 1st floor which would Generate revenue and Improve partnership working and Regeneration of the City Centre.

It was reported that significant Council resources were required to achieve these moves and that accommodating ICB and NHS tenants would involve a wholesale reorganisation of the 1st floor with knock on impacts for 2nd and 3rd floors.

A councillor asked whether any other local authority had rented out parts of their council house to other organisations. It was noted that other local authorities were doing this and that Derby City Council already rented out part of the ground floor of the Council House to the DWP.

A councillor asked whether measures would be put in place to ensure that sensitive information was not accidentally shared with other organisations working in the Council House. It was reported that this risk had been considered and was being taken very seriously. It was noted that measures were being put in place to ensure that this didn't happen.

A councillor asked whether renting out space in the Council House would lead to more colleagues working from home. It was noted that the proposals had been considered by Heads of Service and that more colleagues would not be working from home as a result of this programme.

It was agreed that the Board would receive an update on the wider asset rationalisation programme at a future meeting.

Resolved to note the update.

21/23 How is the Council Monitoring Standards in the Private Rented Sector

The Board received a report and presentation on how the Council was Monitoring Standards in the Private Rented Sector. This was presented by the Service Manager for Housing Standards.

It was reported that the Housing Standards Team received requests for service regarding properties with hazards and non-compliant landlords. It was reported that initially the team would informally approach landlords by letter and would then visit and survey a property. It was reported that the team would then score hazards found (29 in HHSRS) and would then issue schedules of work to landlords and formal notices if needed. It was reported that the team would also seek prosecution or Civil Penalties for non-compliance.

It was reported that the team also licenced Houses in Multiple Occupation and surveyed properties for Derby Homes to be used as temporary accommodation. It was noted that the Housing Standards Team also visited and checked properties for use under the Homes for Ukraine's Scheme.

The Board noted that the Housing Standards Team monitored/licenced properties being used for asylum seekers awaiting decisions on settled Status and worked closely on dual visit with DFRS, Police, GLAA (Gangmasters), Home Office, Social Care and Planning and Building Control.

It was reported that there had been a rise in illegal evictions and harassment complaints from tenants. It was noted that the Housing Standards Team had advised/educated Derbyshire Police about this being criminal offence rather than a civil offence.

It was noted that the Council had a triage system for damp and mould complaints according to extent the issue in photos and the vulnerability of tenants. It was noted that prohibition orders had been made for severe damp and mould cases to increase thermal insulation/envelope. It was note that there had been a 50% increase in urgent cases for same period last year (Nov-Jan 22/23).

It was noted that the Housing Standards Team's work had resulted in an estimated cost to landlords of £132,795 (averaged out £500 across the 226 properties) and had resulted in a total cost savings for the NHS and Wider Society of £337,806 over the following 12 months.

A councillor asked whether the Housing Standards Team were doing any proactive work to educate tenants on their rights. It was noted that the Housing Standards Team took part in door knocking campaigns and also had a letter in six languages for tenants. It was reported that there was information for tenants on the Council's website and that an online application for tenants would be going live the following week. It was agreed that a link to this application would be shared with councillors.

A councillor asked how many unlicensed HMOs there were in the city. It was noted that the number of unlicensed HMOs was not known and that for HMOs of up to six people planning permission wasn't needed. Councillors commented that HMOs were having a negative impact on

many wards in the city and that additional licensing should be implemented for HMOs in Derby.

The Board resolved:

1. to note the update.
2. to recommend that the Council organise a campaign, and create an on-going programme, to educate tenants on their rights and how to reach out to the Housing Standards Team if they are experiencing issues. The information will be targeted towards community and religious hubs, organisations and local councillors for distribution within their communities. The information is to be explained in the simplest way possible.
3. to recommend that the relevant cabinet members and senior officers investigate the existence of the evidence required to introduce additional licensing, especially with regard to addressing the issue of HMOs which are not captured by existing legislation.

22/23 Work Programme 2023/24

The Board considered a report setting out the Terms of Reference and Remit of the Board.

The report provided Members of the Board with the opportunity to consider its terms of reference and remit for the forthcoming municipal year, its work programme for 2023/24 and any topic reviews.

The Board resolved to note the information provided within the report.

Minutes End.