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MEMBER COMMITTEE

Meeting: 13 February 2023
At: 2.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Helen Foster-Grime (Chair) in the chair; Councillors Brian Bagnall, Anna Charles-Jones, Keith Holloway, Linda Holt, David Meller and Wendy Wild.

1. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 10 October 2022 were approved as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

3. URGENT DECISIONS

No urgent decisions were reported.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions were submitted.

5. DAMP AND MOULD UPDATE

The Director of Operations submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided Member Committee with information on the actions that Stockport Homes Group had taken to address homes affected by damp and mould following an external audit and also provided information on a customer scrutiny review of procedures following the news of the death of Awaab Ishak.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Had consideration been given to disabled people or older people who might be particularly vulnerable to this issue?
- Members asked what learnings and common themes/issues had been gained particularly in terms of prevention and cure?
- Members asked whether thinking in relation to damp and mould would change in relation to new builds?
- Members requested that a presentation goes to the Full Council Meeting in relation to this issue. In response, Member Committee was advised that this would be investigated.
- Members raised the issue of those tenants who do not have English as a first language, would they know where to go for help?
- Members were very keen on the pro-active approach that had been outlined in the report and felt that lessons could be learned from other providers.

- Members requested an update in relation to essential works that needed to be carried out within a 5-day timescale.
- A short discussion took place on the impact of introducing a mechanical system.
- An update on this issue was requested for a future meeting of Member Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. BUILDING SAFETY PILOT UPDATE

The Director of Operations submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which updated Member Committee on various aspects of the building safety agenda.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members asked about the position when residents refused sprinklers.
- In relation to information provided to the Fire Service, Members asked what efforts were made to ensure that disabled and vulnerable tenants were moved to a property where they can be evacuated. In response, Member Committee was advised that this was monitored but often people wished to remain in their own home. A stay safe, stay put policy was in operation.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. UPDATE ON RENT ARREARS PERFORMANCE AND PRO-ACTIVE WORK TO SUPPORT CUSTOMERS AND MINIMISE ARREARS

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided Member Committee with an update on rent arrears performance at the end of December 2022. The report provided an insight into how customers were managing rent payments during the current cost of living crisis. The report also presented plans to support customers with rent and service charge increases from April 2023 and aimed to get Members' views on the plans.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members asked about the impact on residents of the cost-of-living crisis and in particular the increase on energy charges. In response, the Committee was advised of the support that was being put in place from April onwards. Some tenants had been protected as the energy had been purchased in advance, but this could not continue, and many residents would face a significant increase.
- Members were keen to have regular updates on this issue.
- Members asked whether the surplus commission money had been used for the benefit of residents? In response the Committee was advised that Stockport Homes had committed to spend these monies on social inclusion projects. Members felt it would have been useful to have this listed in the report.
- A short discussion took place on what was meant by an affordability tariff.

- What would be the impact of not doing the proposed increases? In response the Committee was advised that the reality was that there have been significant increases in the last 12 months. Many tenants have been in receipt of government subsidies, but these were coming to an end. Discussions were held regarding whether the costs can be lowered. It is difficult to achieve fairness and with a person-centred approach. If anything can be done to lower costs, then this would be done.
- Members expressed their concerns about the increases and stressed the importance of people being able to heat their homes and whether this should take priority over social inclusion.
- Members acknowledged that the pressures on social housing budgets were extreme.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. STOCKPORT HOMES GROUP BUSINESS PLAN 2023-2026

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which advised Members of the Committee of the Stockport Homes Group Business Plan 2023-2026.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members requested more information about the pressures facing Stockport Homes and partner organisations.
- A short discussion took place relating to the relationship between Stockport Homes Group and Stockport Council and how Stockport Homes could assist in delivering the Council's strategic objectives.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. FINANCIAL MONITORING UPDATE

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided an update to Member Committee on Stockport Homes' financial performance to December 2022.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided an update on performance against key performance indicators.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11. MEMBER COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT

The Chief Executive, Stockport Homes submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which updated Members on issues not included in other reports but which are likely to be of interest.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members were pleased to note that the Furniture stores had now got a new showroom.
- Members asked whether a timeline was available in relation to the 15 properties mentioned in point number 5 of the report. In response, the Committee was advised that a timeline was not available at the present time, it was necessary to find a contractor who could do the work at an affordable price.
- Members commented on the success of the Brinnington Jobs Fair.
- Members thanked the representatives of Stockport Homes Group for the work that they were doing in very difficult circumstances. Particular praise was given for the work carried out via the Skylight initiative.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

12. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The meeting closed at 3.42 pm