

MEMBER COMMITTEE

Meeting: 12 February 2024

At: 2.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Mark Roberts (Chair) in the chair; Councillors Anna Charles-Jones, James Frizzell, Colin MacAlister, Claire Vibert, Rachel Wise and Asa Caton.

1. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 9 October 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

3. URGENT DECISIONS

No urgent decisions were reported.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Members of the public were invited to put questions to the Chair on any matters within the powers and duties of the Committee, subject to the exclusions set out in the Code of Practice.

No public questions were submitted.

5. MANAGEMENT OF LANCASHIRE HILL

The Executive Director of Operations (Stockport Homes) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided an update on challenges faced at Lancashire Hill and the actions being taken to address them.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- The Chair thanked ward councillors for their work in this area.
- If the consultation on internal doors which was currently in progress, resulted in cost savings, could this be used to improve security? In response, the Committee was advised that there were currently approximately 11 jobs outstanding. Any monies saved would be spent at Lancashire Hill. The consultation had gone out on electronic noticeboards and email and text and was due to close in 8 days' time.
- There were a number of trees blocking CCTV in certain key locations and those trees would need to be removed. Members felt that this was not ideal and asked

whether the trees could be replanted elsewhere. The Committee was advised that this would be investigated, and a response would come back to the Committee.

- Following a Member question regarding patrolling and Anti-Social behaviour, it was reported that a CCTV control room had now come into the neighbourhood. A scoping exercise was currently being carried out, with the idea that mobile wardens may be able to do patrols in a van. The wardens would not need to get involved in any activity but merely be eyes and ears for reporting purposes. It was proposed that the pilot scheme be run from Lancashire Hill. It would then need to be evaluated and costing and recruitment implications considered.
- Members reported that the new caretakers at Lancashire Hill were doing a fantastic job. It was acknowledged that the work of the caretakers can feel quite relentless and that it was common operationally to change the teams over from time to time.
- It was very difficult trying to manage families with children in an environment built for 1-2 people.
- Lancashire Hill was in need of significant refurbishment. Members noted that Stockport Homes felt that they had adequate resources from an asset management point of view to bridge the gap until these works could be carried out.
- A complex employment worker role was currently being advertised and this person would spend one day a week at Lancashire Hill..
- A short discussion took place with regard to vouchers and how this system worked specifically in relation to Lancashire Hill.
- Members raised the issue of there being 3 different channels for reporting repairs etc and whether this had been effective. In response, the Committee was advised that a task force on damp and mould had been set up in January. By March it was hoped that there would be a rapid response of between 10-14 days. Sometimes this problem was down to overcrowding and poor ventilation. Difficulties arose when repairs were reported but then access to the property was not granted. However, there had been some real success stories.
- There was an arrangement in place with private landlords for over 500 family homes.
- Members felt that the lessons learned at Lancashire Hill could be spread across the whole Stockport Homes estate. It was vital that these actions stuck and that the momentum was maintained.
- It was suggested that a report comes to Member Committee relating to high rise blocks generally. Management of these blocks was extremely challenging. Stockport Homes' blocks were among the best managed, but it was not perfect.
- It was felt that communication needed to be improved between Stockport Homes and the residents and that it was vital to incentivise those people who did care about their property and surroundings.
- It was reported that when people forget their fobs they can still ring through to building control for access. Action was always taken when people were caught breaking doors.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

The Director of Housing Plus (Stockport Homes) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided Member Committee with an outline of Stockport Homes

Group's approach to investing money, time and skills in local communities to deliver on its mission to be 'one team, transforming lives.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members made the point that many people can find it difficult to find and hold on to paid work and that lots of people are trapped in low paid work. Employment is not necessarily a route out of poverty. People may have caring responsibilities for example which could impact on their employment opportunities. It was felt that the proposal was an excellent ambition, but in terms of the description it needed to be clear that working and being free was not necessarily as easy as it used to be.
- Members asked about housing provision for older residents and whether there was a risk of fracturing social bonds. In response, the Committee was advised that it was recognised that some older residents would not want to move.
- Objective 4 referred to strengthening mental health, it was felt that improved mental health should be the objective and that people should be healthy as they moved into their later years. Members were pleased to see that participation in sport and improved physical and mental health was explicitly referenced.
- Work was being carried out specifically in the area of the quality of beds and some targeted advertising was being placed in more affluent areas.
- There was huge demand for counselling and Beacon Counselling had been commissioned to assist with this.
- Members asked if more detailed information could be provided on why disabled people might not engage.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. GROUP INCOME COLLECTION STRATEGY

The Executive Director of Resources (Stockport Homes) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which presented to Member Committee the Group Income Collection Strategy 2023-26.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- It was confirmed that Stockport Homes do not deliver debt advice, but they do offer wider budgeting support.

RESOLVED – That the report and associated action plan be noted.

8. CUSTOMER VOICE AND INFLUENCE STRATEGY

The Director of Housing Plus (Stockport Homes) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which presented Member Committee with the updated Customer Voice and Influence Strategy.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Controlling and managing informal feedback was vitally important.

- Members considered that having a clear structure and awareness of community engagement was impressive, particularly in view of the significant changes that would be happening from April.
- Residents could also raise issues at forum meetings and there needed to be a strong plan with regard to turning issues into action. Again, communication was key and there needed to be accountability throughout the chain.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Executive Director of Resources (Stockport Homes) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided Member Committee with an update on performance and tenant satisfaction against key performance indicators and tenant satisfaction measures. A Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) update had been provided at Appendix 3 to update Member Committee on DMC performance.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- It was noted that there were a number of measures that did not have targets. Members asked if there was an opportunity here for more robust reporting particularly as Members received a lot of complaints from residents. The Committee was assured that these comments had been taken on board.
- Members asked about the drop in figures around damp, mould and condensation and whether this was due to the weather? In response, the Committee was advised that there was quite a lot of work going on in this area and that there was often change in the warmer months. Stockport Homes was committed to ensuring that they were performing within the boundaries.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. FINANCIAL MONITORING UPDATE

The Executive Director of Resources (Stockport Homes) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided Member Committee with an update on Stockport Homes' financial performance to December 2023.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members noted the continued impact of inflation and the pressure this was putting on many businesses.
- In response to a Member question regarding Melford Road properties being sold for less than costs, the Committee was advised that this had been tendered again at today's costs and inflation had to be taken into account. This was a reflection of housing market costs.
- It was noted that rental income was limited and that coming to a more stable position would depend on government rent strategy, which could make a significant difference.

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 were likely to be of interest.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members were advised that as the Council is Stockport Homes' one shareholder, this meeting was taken very seriously and by the time of the next meeting, Stockport Homes would be subject to regulation.
- Social housing was currently in the worst place that it had been for some time, and things continued to be very challenging.
- Members noted that the mutual exchange figures were very encouraging and asked about national programmes that Stockport Homes were involved with.
- The Chair asked Members what areas they would like to know more about or have reports on for future meetings. Members stated the following:
 - Management of high rise blocks more generally
 - Communication with residents
 - Looking at area where Stockport Homes feel there is a need for social housing.
 - Temporary accommodation, the gap in funding and how Stockport Homes works with its partners particularly in the private sector.
 - High reported areas for example repairs, homelessness and anti-social behaviour. Members are keen to understand where Stockport Homes add value.
 - Members of this Committee want to be aware of any reports going to housing scrutiny for example.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm