

November 2023 - Housing Team

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Report or Presentation	Committee Resolution	Committee Comments	Accepted (Y/N)	Action taken
28-Nov-23	Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting And Business Plan	Report (Ref BHP49)	1. The importance of ensuring accessibility to services for all whether utilising digital or non-digital methods.	7. That ensuring accessibility through non-digital means for those who preferred of who needed these options was emphasised.	Y	It is recognised that offline communication methods will need to remain available for vulnerable customers to avoid digital exclusion. Customer communication preferences are currently noted on the IT housing management system with pop up alerts identifying individual preferences.
			2. That the committee's comments regarding wastewater treatment and cost recovery were considered as part of the formation of any future proposals.	1. Regarding Wastewater Treatment Plants, the following points were raised: a. the level of HRA subsidisation for private housing served by wastewater treatment plants. b. The cost-sharing for different house types. c. the risk of additional burden on smaller houses due to the current charging system, which treated a one-bedroom bungalow the same as a larger house. d. the costs of removing nutrients from wastewater treatment plants and ensuring maintenance cost increases do not impact tenants and residents.	Y	Cabinet Report 3445 (February 2024) set out the Sewage Treatment Services proposals seeking to fully-recover the total cost of providing sewage treatment services to all residents, so that these services are not subsidised by other council tenants. Subject to consultation cost recovery for these services to all residents will be over a transitional nine-year period. A Sewage Treatment Services project group has been established this year and will encompass committee comments.
			3. That the Cabinet Member and officers note the other comments of the committee as outlined above.	2. That concerns about the disposal strategy's impact on temporary accommodation and the need for planning flexibility were raised.	Y	A Review of all council Temporary accommodation (TA) provision and work on supporting housing pathways, will be presented to Cabinet Committee:Housing on 5 November 2024. Work is in progress to financially appraise an empty TA provision to understand if it is cost effective to bring back into use.
				3. That vital support for tenants during the cost-of-living crisis, extending beyond affordable housing and energy efficiency, was highlighted.	Y	The DWP household support fund is extended to March 2025 to assist households with exceptional housing costs. Various council teams can make referrals to the scheme and customers can self refer.
				4. That the possibility of purchasing ex-council houses at reduced rates for retrofitting or renting them out was raised.	Y	In July 2024 Cabinet Committee approved the purchase of 4 ex-council properties to bring back into use. 3 to be allocated to those with housing need via the housing register. 1 property will be used to rehouse a Ukrainian Household via the 'Homes for Ukrainian' Scheme. 2 purchases are underway.
				5. That concerns about shared ownership rents and their impact on constructing affordable homes were expressed.	Y	Noted.
				6. That further additional information regarding the workforce implications and potential restructuring within the Housing Team was requested.	Y	Staffing restructuring plans and changes were shared with Cllr Westwood, HR with approvals at ELB level.
			8. That further information regarding benchmarking the council's affordable housing provision against other comparable councils was sought.	Y	This is undertaken as part of the annual rent setting process.	
			9. That inquiries were made regarding the timeline and considerations in disposing of land plots and properties, focusing on both monetary and community values.	Y	The adopted Asset Management Strategy sets out the current requirements and approvals for disposals of HRA assets. The strategy is due to be refreshed in 2024/25.	