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ECONOMY AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2 July 2025

Attendance:

Councillors
Batho (Chairperson)

Chamberlain
Eve
Morris
Murphy

Gordon-Smith
Bolton
White

Other members in attendance:

Councillor(s) Thompson and Cutler

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations were made.

3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRPERSON FOR THE 2025/26 MUNICIPAL YEAR.**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Chamberlain be appointed Vice-Chairperson for the 2025/26 municipal year.

4. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No announcements were made.

5. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2025**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 February 2025 be approved and adopted.

6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Ian Tait addressed the committee. He raised the issue of the council's policy concerning "Ring" doorbells and similar devices within the communal areas of council-owned properties. He highlighted a specific instance where a tenant had installed a device on a communal wall that could record a neighbour's property.

Mr Tait felt that clarity was required and suggested a clear, published policy on the matter. He asked the committee to consider if a formal policy was required and whether the current procedures for granting permission, which were based on "exceptional circumstances", were fit for purpose.

In response, Simon Hendey, Strategic Director referenced the tenancy agreement, which stated that tenants required prior consent to install any object in communal areas. Yvonne Anderson, Service Lead - Housing Landlord Services added that the antisocial behaviour policy was under review to develop a more pragmatic approach to "Ring" doorbells. Councillor Batho thanked Mr Tait. The matter would be brought to the attention of the Cabinet Member for Good Homes to decide on a policy approach.

7. **SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION CONSUMER STANDARD IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Councillor Neil Cutler, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation attended on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Good Homes and introduced the report, ref CAB 3511(H), which outlined the Social Housing Regulation Consumer Standard Improvement Plan. The introduction included the following points.

1. In February 2024, the Cabinet Committee (Housing) received a report on new consumer standards, and the housing service was asked to undertake a self-assessment.
2. Following an internal self-assessment, an external independent assessment was commissioned which identified long-term issues that would jeopardise the council's ability to meet safety and quality standards.
3. In February 2025, the Cabinet Committee (Housing) was informed that a self-referral had been made to the Social Housing Regulator.
4. The regulator made a judgment on 30 April 2025 of C3, indicating serious failings and a need for improvement in safety, quality, transparency, influence, and accountability.
5. An improvement plan had been developed and was shared with the regulator, with monthly meetings established to demonstrate progress.
6. It was noted that work with the regulator was expected to take approximately 18 months, after which the service could be subject to an inspection.

The committee was asked to comment on the proposals within the attached cabinet report, ref CAB 3511(H) which was to be considered by the Cabinet Committee (Housing) at its meeting on 23 July 2025. The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. A question was asked about the feedback received from residents following the communication sent to them.
2. Clarification was sought on the structure of the report and how priorities were agreed with the regulator, specifically regarding target dates and the process for revising them.
3. A question was asked about how the priorities were determined and whether the compliance work was prioritised due to safety concerns.
4. A query was raised regarding the budgetary provisions for contract resources, given the potential staffing challenges and the premium cost associated with agency staff.
5. A question was asked about the extent of the additional workload for officers, in terms of hours, cost, or staffing, as a result of the referral.
6. A question was asked about the measures being taken to update processes and procedures to ensure that compliance data was correctly managed for the long term after the initial catch-up work was completed.
7. A concern was raised about whether Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) would impede the implementation of new systems.
8. A question was asked about the progress of transferring data from external contractors to internal systems.
9. A specific question was asked about the electrical safety checks, particularly whether a new contractor was in place and if the catch-up work was underway.
10. Clarification was sought on the reasons for the minor slippage in mobilising the stock condition survey and the expected start and finish timelines.
11. A question was asked about the process for establishing an ongoing, regular review of housing stock conditions after the initial comprehensive survey was completed.
12. Information was requested on the outcomes of the safety checks being conducted, including any emerging areas of concern.
13. Clarification was sought regarding the references within the report to asbestos, what this entailed, and whether it posed an active safety concern or was a procedural issue.
14. A question was asked whether an uplift in the regulatory grading would be expected if the improvement plan was adhered to.
15. A concern was raised regarding the statement on page 38 about ensuring sufficient funding for actions derived from asbestos surveys, and whether this could lead to significant unforeseen costs.

These points were responded to by Councillor Neil Cutler, Simon Hendey, Strategic Director and Yvonne Anderson, Service Lead - Housing Landlord Services accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That confirmation be sought from the Cabinet Member for Good Homes that the Cabinet Committee (Housing) would be responsible for monitoring the improvement plan.
2. That the committee would discuss at a subsequent meeting the impact of future government regulations, including an officer perspective on the council's proposed response.
3. The Cabinet Member consider the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

8. **REVIEW OF THE ECONOMY AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS FOR 2024/25**

The Chairperson introduced the item, which was a review of the Economy and Housing Policy Committee resolutions for 2024/25. The introduction included the following points.

1. The review was an opportunity for members to reflect on papers that had come before the committee during the previous year.
2. The report provided officer comments and responses to the resolutions that the committee had made.
3. It allowed the committee a final opportunity to ask questions or make comments on the previously discussed papers.

The committee were asked to note the responses to the Economy and Housing Policy Committee's previous resolutions. The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised:

1. Regarding the take-up numbers for the retrofit and digital skills training, clarification was sought on whether the numbers met expectations and were considered to be good.
2. A question was asked if there was any early indication of further grant funding becoming available from the Rural Prosperity Fund.
3. Clarification was sought on whether it was possible for the council to support rural primary schools with installations such as solar panels.
4. A question was asked about the scheme or mechanism the council used to secure employment and skills plans from businesses for local developments.
5. Regarding the Shared Prosperity Fund, a question was raised as to whether the equitable distribution of funding across wards was assessed annually or if it also factored in the history of which wards had received funding previously.

6. Further clarification was sought on whether the distribution of funds was managed on an organisation-by-organisation basis rather than by wards or regions.
7. Regarding the housing repairs and maintenance policy, an update was requested on the appeals process for the recharge policy, specifically whether it had been used since its implementation.

These points were responded to by Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture and Simon Hendey, Strategic Director accordingly.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the Economy and Housing Policy Committee Resolutions for 2024/25 was noted.

9. **TO NOTE THE COMMITTEE'S CURRENT WORK PROGRAMME.**

The Chairperson introduced the committee's current work programme. It was noted that following a meeting of the Policy and Scrutiny Committee Chairs, the availability of resources to undertake "task and finish groups" was being reviewed.

Members were invited to consider topics they wished to raise for these groups. It was noted that a further meeting of the Chairs was scheduled for August, where topics for the "task and finish groups" would be formally decided. Once agreed, there was the potential for additional work to be commissioned through the policy group at its September meeting.

RESOLVED:

The current work programme was noted.

10. **TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS.**

The Chairperson provided an update regarding the key items for the remaining meetings for the municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That the dates of the future meetings of the committee be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 7.35 pm

Chairperson

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