

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 28 November 2024

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice Chair), Stephen Booth, Kamal Choudhury, Alistair Gordon and Mason Humberstone

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.50pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Leanne Brady, Akin Elekolusi, Lynda Guy and Jade Woods.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 4 NOVEMBER 2024

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 4 November 2024 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 HOUSING DAMP & MOULD UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation giving an update on the scrutiny review of Damp and Mould from the Disrepair and Damp and Mould Manager.

The Committee was advised that in relation to the performance of the service:

- a target of 20 days for all building work order requests had been established;
- For November the work order KPI performance stood at 83.64%;
- There were currently 114 active work orders related to D&M;
- The average cost per job was approximately £1,735;
- Any overdue work orders were primarily linked to roofing issues or instances where access had not been granted by the tenant.

Officers informed the Committee that to ensure that the service remained fit for purpose a review of the policy would be undertaken alongside a stock condition survey programme and the adoption of a case management approach. Further developments included air quality monitors, use of technology and alternative wall finishes.

It was noted that 100% of pre and post inspections were carried out by inhouse inspectors with 3 and 6 month follow on inspections to ensure works had been effective.

In relation to resources, Members were advised that a review of staffing resources had been completed in May 2024. The Disrepair and Damp and Mould teams had been combined and merged into a single team. Recruitment was in progress to make permanent appointments to new and agency filled roles and the procurement of support contractors was in progress.

In order to enhance responsiveness and support for tenants, staff within the Customer Service Centre (CSC) communicated daily with the D&M team. Direct line of communication had been established, including mobile contacts, to ensure immediate assistance for tenant inquiries and requests.

Officers advised that while progress in tackling D&M concerns was being made, it was believed that there was significant potential for strengthening communication and alignment with the Decent Homes Programme and the repairs team. By working collaboratively, the service would be enhanced and better outcomes achieved.

In response to a number of questions, Officers responded as follows:

- In relation to water ingress or leaks, ensuring that these repairs were managed effectively was crucial, as inadequate drying could lead to D&M issues later on. Addressing these concerns promptly would help the avoidance of complications down the line;
- Each concern was dealt with on its merits on a case by case basis and would involve Housing teams when appropriate. Officers would work closely with tenants, building relationships with them to consider options including decanting the tenant if needed;
- Complex cases would be dealt with by way of a case conference to consider the most appropriate way forward;
- On-site surveyors were reporting cases immediately following the roll-out of technology. The 20 day target to rectify the issue would then commence;

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation and advised that she was pleased to see the improvements to the Service.

It was **RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

4 **HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Housing Asset Management outlining the key areas covered by the Service.

The Committee was informed that the team had developed all programmes of works using stock intelligence gathered in consultation with residents and housing management as this was key to understanding the condition of the stock.

In relation to Decent Homes, it was agreed that continued investment in the stock was key to meeting and maintaining compliance with the standard. Further consultation would be undertaken on Decent Homes 2 and a detailed communications strategy would be drawn up to ensure transparency for tenants on where their property was within the programme.

Officers reported on the current position in respect of decarbonisation and energy efficiency with 2684 properties still requiring work to meet the minimum Band C target. Over £5million funding had been secured with SBC match funding and a Warm Homes bid for 550 homes would be submitted. It was noted that to achieve net zero by 2050, £169million investment would be required.

An update was given on the current capital programme including

- Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC),
- Decent Homes,
- SHDF Wave 2 – Delivery of Energy Efficiency Measures to flat blocks and Street Properties;
- High Rise – Replacement Fire Doors (Flats and Communal);
- Fencing Programme – Planned programme of over £1million this year.

It was noted that in relation to High Rise Refurbishment Works, consultation was due to start in December and would include roofing, windows, heating, communal area decoration and re-modelling. Overall, the Investment in the existing stock over the next 5 years totalled £110 million.

In response to a question regarding the fencing programme, Officers advised that the fencing policy had been reviewed and was now more robust to avoid the constant fence replacements.

Improvements relating to the voids service were reported including the procurement of support contractors as the service moved to a hybrid delivery model. It was recognised that although there had been improvements there was still work to do within the service.

Members were advised that the Aids and Adaptations Policy was in the process of being reworked and would ensure the Council was making the best use of the properties available and consider where the aids and adaptations were most appropriate and that reasonable adjustments could be made to ensure compliance with the Equality Act.

The chair asked for clarification that there was not any change to fix term tenancies. Officers confirmed that there were currently no plans to change the existing policy. Tenants who were offered the opportunity to move to sheltered accommodation were at liberty to accept or decline the offer.

Following further consideration, it was agreed that Aids and Adaptations be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for more targeted scrutiny.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the presentation be noted;
2. That a further review of the Aids and Adaptation works be brought back to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

5 **HOUSING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

The Committee received a presentation informing Members on how ASB and Hate Crime was managed within the Housing Management Department. Key areas of the draft Tenants and Leaseholders ASB policy were highlighted and the roles and resources available to assist with this process were identified alongside details of the main legislation that was used when enforcement procedures were necessary.

Officers recognised that anti-social behaviour was a priority issue for local people and that such behaviour could have a severe effect on the well-being of residents. It was noted that the Council had a duty to take action to minimise it through preventative measures, enforcement actions, and support for victims, witnesses, and staff. Support would be put in place for victims and perpetrators to try and resolve the ASB with an understanding that not everyone was aware their behaviour was impacting others.

The revised Draft Policy set out the Council's approach to ASB including how the Council would work with victims, witnesses, partners and the Police.

It was noted that as part of their Tenancy Agreement each tenant is issued with a set of tenancy conditions by which they must abide. Leaseholders were issued with a lease agreement.

Definitions of the different levels of ASB and Hate Crime were outlined for the Committee as well as enforcement, tools and powers the team and wider agencies could use.

In response to a question regarding the expectations of complainants, Members were advised that these had to be managed from an early stage as most cases took a substantial amount of time to reach a conclusion. Support would be available for all involved from the start of a case.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation and for the work the Team did in this very difficult area.

It was **RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

6 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was none.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

CHAIR