

Housing Sub-Committee

27 March 2017

Present: Councillor S Cox (Chair)
Councillors A Arkle, K Bolger, L Darke, D
Drummond, John Hunter, N Huscroft, M
Madden, P Mason, A Newman, M Rankin and
M Thirlaway

HO43/03/17 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence received.

HO44/03/17 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

HO45/03/17 Declarations of Interest

Cllr M Thirlaway declared a non-registerable personal interest in relation to minute HO48/03/17 Kier Performance as his father worked for Kier North Tyneside.

Cllr K Bolger declared a registerable personal interest in relation to Minute HO48/03/17 Kier Performance as she worked frontline for partner ENGIE serving customers on welfare reform and housing related issues including repairs.

HO46/03/17 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

HO47/03/17 House Building Monitoring

Members received a report which aimed to keep the sub-committee up-to-date with house building in the authority. It was noted that outstanding planning permissions for residential development are monitored on a quarterly basis looking at the on-site progress of all sites delivering more than five homes. The Authority monitored where sites had started, the number of homes completed and those under construction.

Attached to the covering report was a schedule which set out House Building Monitoring for Quarter 3 2016-17 (upto 31st December 2016). It was intended to present the data to the sub-committee every quarter to ensure that the committee had the best and most accurate figure for housing completions. It was noted that the data presented informed the housing evidence base, fed into the calculations for the Council's five-year housing land supply and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

The data showed each site with a planning application or appeal (for the applicable time period), the total dwellings permitted, cumulative delivery across quarters 1-3 and the number of dwellings still to be built following the latest quarter. It was noted that the rate of delivery had been good so far this year and there was always potential for seasonal variations to occur in delivery rates. Members asked for clarification on location of several sites and expressed a preference for the future data to be presented by date order of

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planning applications granted rather than number of dwellings on site.

It was **agreed** to note the information provided.

HO48/03/17 Kier North Tyneside Performance

The sub-committee received a report which provided the latest performance information relating to housing repairs and housing investment work through Kier North Tyneside, the Council's Joint Venture Company.

It was noted that Kier North Tyneside deliver all construction and maintenance services for the Council. The key premise of the partnership was delivering high performing services to customers that continue to improve over time. A comprehensive suite of Key Performance Indicators had been developed across the service and were regularly reviewed through contract governance arrangements. Performance information was attached to the report in relation to Repairs and Maintenance and Investment.

In relation to gas servicing, it was noted that the Council had a legal responsibility as a landlord to access homes and ensure they have a valid gas safety certificate. It was explained that a robust process of gaining access was in place to ensure that the target of 100% of properties with a valid gas servicing certificate was achieved. In relation to repairs, Members asked officers what could be done to deal with gardens that retain a lot of surface water. It was highlighted that problematic gardens would be assessed on a case by case basis. Members were informed of a new drainage tool that was being piloted by Northumbrian Water that, subject to appropriate access requirements, would be used on 2 problematic gardens within the Borough. The sub-committee agreed that it would be useful to be updated in due course with the outcome of the pilot.

In relation to Empty Homes, it was noted that the average time to relet housing was off the target of 30 days. In 2015/16 the number of days had been 29.39; figures for 2016/17 (up to January 2017) was at an average of 35.42 days. The average number of calendar days to repair empty homes was also off target; 23.41 days (as of January 2017), compared to the target of 17.87 days. Customer satisfaction for new tenants had also slipped to 8.05, from 8.16 in 2015/16 and an overall target of 8.12. It was highlighted that additional resources were being deployed to this area in order to improve the targets and specific work was being undertaken with tenants in relation to responsibility and ownership.

A member of the sub-committee asked whether repairs were identified before a tenant vacated a property. It was explained that as soon as a tenant handed in notice of tenancy (28 days), officers would attempt to arrange a visit to look at the condition of the property and identify work that would need to be undertaken. Access to the property was not always successful so this early assessment did not always take place. Whilst some repairs were caused by lack of care taken by tenants, some repairs were related to issues that had not been reported and some where major refurbishment, i.e. new kitchen or heating system, would need to take place before a new tenant could move in. Such upgrades may have been refused by the tenant.

It was explained that tenants were issued with rechargeable repairs bills if they had left a property in a damaged state. There was an escalation process for recovering this money however, especially when tenants had left the housing register, it was hard to recover these costs and it was written off as bad debt. Members asked officers to provide some further information on the number of rechargeable repairs issued and the collection rates of these. Clarification was also sought on what would happen if a former tenant, who had refused to pay for rechargeable repairs, reapplied to go back on the housing register. Officers undertook to look into these issues and report back.

Members of the sub-committee expressed concern and disappointment at the current figures relating to the Empty Homes targets and hoped to see an improvement in these figures the next time a performance report was brought before committee.

Appendix 2 to the report highlighted performance in relation to the 2016/17 Housing Investment Programme , which consisted of 29 main projects and a range of other ancillary projects. To date, 18 schemes had been completed and 11 schemes were on site.

It was **agreed** to note the contents of the report.