

Minutes

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 3 October 2023

Present

Councillors Meagher (Convener), Bruce, Caldwell, Dobbin, Flannery, Hyslop, Key (items 1 to 15), Mowat (substituting for Councillor Whyte), Parker, Pogson and Rae.

1. Minutes

Decision

To approve the minute of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 8 August 2023 as a correct record.

3. Work Programme

The Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee Work Programme was presented.

Decision

To note the work programme.

(Reference – Work Programme, submitted.)

4. Rolling Actions Log

The Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee Rolling Actions Log was presented.

Decision

- 1) To agree to close the following actions:
 - Action 2 (2 and 3) – 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme
 - Action 6 (1,3 and 4) – Response to motion by Councillor Campbell – Colliedene House Lifts
 - Action 7 (1,3 and 4) – Damp, mould and condensation in Council homes update

- Action 8 (1 and 6) – Capital Funding Opportunities for Council Housing
 - Action 10 (1,3 and 4) – Business Bulletin
 - Action 11 (4) – Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan – Annual Update on Progress
 - Action 13 (1) – UK Shared Prosperity Fund
 - Action 15 – Affordable Housing Policy Update 2023 – referral from the Planning Committee
 - Action 16 – Motion by Councillor Meagher – Family and Household Support
- 2) To otherwise note the remaining outstanding actions.

(Reference – Rolling Actions Log, submitted.)

5. Business Bulletin

The Business Bulletin was presented.

Decision

- 1) To note the Business Bulletin.
- 2) To request a regular update in the Business Bulletin on the issues associated with data recording against Accessible Housing stock..

(Reference – Business Bulletin, submitted.)

6. Whole House Retrofit

In response to an action agreed by Committee on 9 March 2023, details were provided of additional benefits which could be realised through a Whole House Retrofit (WHR) approach, especially in terms of ensuring Council homes were adapted to meet the needs of a changing climate.

Motion

To note the report by the Executive Director of Place.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

Amendment

- 1) To note the report by the Executive Director of Place.
- 2) To welcome the ongoing work of the whole house retrofit programme to improve estates, including the realising of wider nature / biodiversity / sustainability co-benefits as part of this.
- 2) To recognise that some of this work will include changing practices from the norm and that this will be a learning process for workers across all aspects of the housing service, and for tenants who experience changes on the ground.
- 3) To request a briefing note outlining what training around biodiversity/ nature has already been in place for workers in the housing service, and what regular

training programme is planned for workers on this going forward to ensure that future works successfully deliver co-benefits for nature / biodiversity.

- 4) To request that the briefing note includes information about how tenants are kept informed about estate changes relating to biodiversity / nature, and how they are encouraged to participate in this – for example, through citizen science projects and community growing spaces.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Rae

In accordance with Standing Order 22(12), the Amendment was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To note the report by the Executive Director of Place.
- 2) To welcome the ongoing work of the whole house retrofit programme to improve estates, including the realising of wider nature / biodiversity / sustainability co-benefits as part of this.
- 3) To recognise that some of this work would include changing practices from the norm and that this would be a learning process for workers across all aspects of the housing service, and for tenants who experience changes on the ground.
- 4) To request a briefing note outlining what training around biodiversity / nature had already been in place for workers in the housing service, and what regular training programmes were planned for workers on this going forward to ensure that future works successfully delivered co-benefits for nature / biodiversity.
- 5) To request that the briefing note included information about how tenants were kept informed about estate changes relating to biodiversity / nature, and how they were encouraged to participate in this – for example, through citizen science projects and community growing spaces.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 9 March 2023 (item 5); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

7. Capital City Partnership – Progress Update

An update was provided on the progress that had been made against the objectives and targets detailed within the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council and Capital City Partnership (CCP).

Motion

- 1) To note the progress made by Capital City Partnership (CCP) against their Service Level Agreement (SLA) objectives and targets.

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- 2) To note that COVID-19 had a major impact on the employment landscape as a whole, with corresponding changes in the strategic and operational landscape at national and local level, impacting employability delivery across the city.
- 3) To note that, as the current SLA was in its final year, a review was currently being undertaken and a new SLA would be presented to Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee for approval in January 2024.
- 4) To refer the report by the Executive Director of Place to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee for noting.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Watt

Amendment

- 1) To note the progress made by Capital City Partnership (CCP) against their Service Level Agreement (SLA) objectives and targets.
- 2) To note that COVID-19 had a major impact on the employment landscape as a whole, with corresponding changes in the strategic and operational landscape at national and local level, impacting employability delivery across the city.
- 3) To note that, as the current SLA was in its final year, a review was currently being undertaken and a new SLA would be presented to Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee for approval in January 2024.
- 4) To refer the report by the Executive Director of Place to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee for noting.
- 5) To request that the updated SLA includes an increased and renewed focus on green skills and the green economy so that the work of CCP complements the Council's climate strategy and helps to answer the workforce needs / skill gaps identified in that strategy.
- 6) Additionally to request that consideration is given for how CCP could include a workstream / programme focused on retraining workers in carbon intensive industries to transition into green jobs, in line with a just transition approach, and as a preventative action against unemployment.
- 7) To request that these points are captured in the new SLA objectives and that officers engage with groups in the development of these ahead of the report to committee in January 2024.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Rae

In accordance with Standing Order 22(12), the amendment was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To note the progress made by Capital City Partnership (CCP) against their Service Level Agreement (SLA) objectives and targets.
- 2) To note that COVID-19 had a major impact on the employment landscape as a whole, with corresponding changes in the strategic and operational landscape at national and local level, impacting employability delivery across the city.
- 3) To note that, as the current SLA was in its final year, a review was currently being undertaken and a new SLA would be presented to Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee for approval in January 2024.
- 4) To refer the report by the Executive Director of Place to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee for noting.
- 5) To request that the updated SLA included an increased and renewed focus on green skills and the green economy so that the work of CCP complemented the Council's climate strategy and helped to answer the workforce needs / skill gaps identified in that strategy.
- 6) Additionally, to request that consideration be given for how CCP could include a workstream / programme focused on retraining workers in carbon intensive industries to transition into green jobs, in line with a just transition approach, and as a preventative action against unemployment.
- 7) To request that these points be captured in the new SLA objectives and that officers engage with groups in the development of these ahead of the report to committee in January 2024.

(References – Housing and Economy Committee, 18 January 2018 (item 14); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

8. Housing and Homelessness and Business Growth and Inclusion: Revenue Budget Monitoring

A summary of the out-turn for financial year 2022/23 was provided, with a focus on the month three 2023/24 revenue monitoring position. This included early projections for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Housing and Homelessness, and Business Growth and Inclusion.

Decision

- 1) To note the 2022/23 outturn position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the general funding areas of Housing and Homelessness and Business Growth and Inclusion.
- 2) To note the Place service area (which included: Housing and Homelessness, Culture and Wellbeing, Sustainable Development and Operational Services) was forecast at a pressure of £1.95m for 2023/24 as at month three.

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- 3) To note the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was forecasting a contribution of £4.320m to the Strategic Housing Investment Fund (SHIF) from revenue generated in 2023/24. This was £2.658m less than the budgeted contribution.
- 4) To note Housing and Homelessness was forecasting a budget pressure, as at month three, of £1.35m for services delivered in 2023/24.
- 5) To note Business Growth and Inclusion was forecasting an underspend, as at month three, of £0.4m for 2023/24.
- 6) To note that measures will continue to be progressed to offset budget pressures and to fully deliver approved savings targets to achieve outturn expenditure and income in line with the approved revenue budget for 2023/24.
- 7) To note the ongoing risks to the achievement of a balanced revenue budget for services delivered by the Housing and Homelessness service and to delivering the forecast HRA contribution to the SHIF.
- 8) To note the need for all existing pressures, savings delivery shortfalls and risks to be fully and proactively managed within Directorates.
- 9) To note updates would continue to be provided to members of the Committee during the remainder of the year.

(References – Finance and Resources Committee, 21 September 2023 (item 6); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

9. Retrofitting Strategy – response to motion by Councillor Watt

Details were provided of the role of in-house workforce and contractors in delivery of Whole House Retrofit (WHR), including consideration of investing and upskilling of the Council's workforce and the apprenticeship programme.

Motion

- 1) To note the report by the Executive Director of Place on the Council's retrofitting strategy.
- 2) To agree to discharge the action agreed at Finance and Resources Committee on 10 March 2023.
- 3) To note that Finance and Resources Committee would be updated via Business Bulletin.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

Amendment

- 1) To note the report by the Executive Director of Place on the Council's retrofitting strategy.
- 2) To agree to discharge the action agreed at Finance and Resources Committee on 10 March 2023.

- 3) To note that Finance and Resources Committee would be updated via Business Bulletin.
- 4) To recognise that a People Strategy and Strategic Workforce Plan is being developed to support recruitment, retention and development of staff and requests that - once this Plan has been completed - a note on how this interacts with the specific challenges outlined in this report is circulated to members of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee and the Finance and Resources Committee.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Rae

In accordance with Standing Order 22(12), the amendment was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To note the report by the Executive Director of Place on the Council's retrofitting strategy.
- 2) To agree to discharge the action agreed at Finance and Resources Committee on 10 March 2023.
- 3) To note that Finance and Resources Committee would be updated via Business Bulletin.
- 4) To recognise that a People Strategy and Strategic Workforce Plan was being developed to support recruitment, retention and development of staff and request that - once this Plan had been completed - a note on how this interacted with the specific challenges outlined in the report by the Executive Director of Place be circulated to members of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee and the Finance and Resources Committee.

(References – Act of Council No. 4 of 23 February 2023; Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 9 March 2023 (item 5); Finance and Resources Committee, 10 March 2023 (items 7 and 8); Report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

10. HRA Account Budget Strategy 2024/25

The 30-year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2024/25-2053/54 was reviewed annually in consultation with tenants and a five-to-10-year Capital Programme and one-year Capital Investment Budget was approved by the Council. Details were provided of the outcome of the annual review and the impact that had on delivery. Options were set out to mitigate the impact of increases in costs and approval was sought to seek tenants' views on the options as part of the annual budget consultation.

Motion

- 1) To note the increased financial pressure on the Housing Service and the updates made to HRA Business Plan financial assumptions.

- 2) To agree to seek tenant views on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget strategy.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

Amendment

- 1) To note the increased financial pressure on the Housing Service and the updates made to HRA Business Plan financial assumptions.
- 2) To agree to seek tenant views on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget strategy.
- 3) To request that officers immediately and proactively engage with political groups in the run up to the budget setting process to seriously explore how the HRA could be supplemented from the general fund for particular investments – for example, retrofitting and wider environmental estate improvements – so that progress on delivering these is not limited by the ability of Council tenants to pay a rent increase, given the context of the climate and nature emergencies, and in line with a climate justice approach.
- 4) To request that officers send written guidance to all groups about the above.
- 5) To request that officers expand the criteria in Q2 of the consultation to ask about differential rents for older homes which have been retrofitted and are now cheaper to run, rather than exclusively focusing on new builds.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Rae

In accordance with Standing Order 22(12), the amendment was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To note the increased financial pressure on the Housing Service and the updates made to HRA Business Plan financial assumptions.
- 2) To agree to seek tenant views on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget strategy.
- 3) To request that officers immediately and proactively engage with political groups in the run up to the budget setting process to seriously explore how the HRA could be supplemented from the general fund for particular investments – for example, retrofitting and wider environmental estate improvements – so that progress on delivering these is not limited by the ability of Council tenants to pay a rent increase, given the context of the climate and nature emergencies, and in line with a climate justice approach.
- 4) To request that officers send written guidance to all groups about the above.
- 5) To request that officers expand the criteria in Q2 of the consultation to ask about differential rents for older homes which have been retrofitted and are now cheaper to run, rather than exclusively focusing on new builds.

(References – Act of Council No. 4 of 23 February 2023; Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 9 March 2023 (items 5 and 18); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

11. Tenant Participation and Community Engagement 2024/27

An update was provided on tenant participation activities in 2023/24 and the development of a new Tenant Participation Strategy (TPS). Agreement was sought for funding for Edinburgh Tenants' Federation (ETF) for a further two years from 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2026 to support tenant participation and engagement.

Motion

- 1) To continue the report to the next meeting of Housing Homelessness and Fair Work Committee.
- 2) To request a briefing note covering spend and financial commitments of the ETF for every financial quarter of the current funding period and for the future period of funding.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

Amendment

- 1) To agree to fund Edinburgh Tenants' Federation (ETF) for a further two years to 31 March 2026, on a maximum standstill budget of £241,083 per annum.
- 2) To note the update on Neighbourhood Alliance (NA).
- 3) To note that a report will be prepared for Committee in December 2023 on funding and support for community engagement in North East locality.

- moved by Councillor Caldwell, seconded by Councillor Flannery

Voting

The voting was as follows:

For the motion - 9 votes

For the amendment - 2 votes

(For the motion: Councillors Bruce, Dobbin, Hyslop, Key, Meagher, Mowat, Parker, Pogson and Rae.

For the amendment: Councillors Caldwell and Flannery.)

Decision

To approve the motion by Councillor Meagher.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 20 January 2023 (item 7); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

12. Door Entry Systems in Minority Owned Tenements

A proposal was presented to pause the agreed Capital investment in door entry systems for tenement blocks where the Council was a minority owner and repurposing that funding as Capital for the purchase of houses. The intention would be to use the funding to add to the existing Council social rental housing stock in the city at a time where there is acute demand for social housing.

Motion

- 1) To agree to pause the programme of upgrading door entry systems in minority owned blocks.
- 2) To agree the repurpose Capital sums committed to this work for the purchase of property to assist in increasing the number of Council owned socially rented homes available in the city.
- 3) To note that this would be managed as part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme in line with the Council's current scheme of delegation.
- 4) To note that a Business Bulletin update would be provided in three cycles advising how the agreed funds have been committed.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

Amendment 1

- 1) To agree that antisocial behaviour is a serious issue with detrimental impacts to wellbeing, mental and physical health and safety of residents affected.
- 2) To agree that all council tenants deserve to have a home that is safe and secure, regardless of whether they live in a mixed tenure stair or not.
- 3) To note there is no information about
 - What blocks and what areas will not have secure door entry systems.
 - Any information about the number and type of homes which the council would gain.
- 4) To agree to continue this decision to allow for a more detailed report including:
 - How many blocks will be affected if the secure entry systems are not installed.
 - How many council tenants will be affected if the secure entry systems are not installed.
 - Where these blocks are.
 - Information about incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour in those areas
 - How many blocks remain across the city with no secure door entry but at least one council home.
- 5) The report should also set out:
 - How many homes approximately the funding could secure.
 - Assurances on the type and quality of the home, for example will they meet EESSH2 standards.

- moved by Councillor Hyslop, seconded by Councillor Dobbin

Amendment 2

- 1) Believes it is not appropriate to compromise on the security and physical safety of existing Council tenants in minority blocks and therefore retains the programme.
- 2) Recognises that minority blocks have suffered severe cuts to maintenance in the past.
- 3) Regrets the £176.8m Scottish Government cut to Scotland's 'More Homes' capital housing programme including the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) and real terms cut of Transfer Management Development Funding (TMDF) for Edinburgh and Glasgow. Regrets that funding re-instatement was not listed as a priority in the 2023/24 Programme for Government.
- 4) Requests the Convenor write to the Minister for Tenants Rights and the Minister for Housing outlining opposition to such compromises to fund statutory obligations, and requests that the AHSP & TMDF cuts in the 23/24 Scottish Budget are reviewed in the 24/25 budget.

- moved by Councillor Caldwell, seconded by Councillor Flannery

Amendment 3

- 1) Notes that 832 blocks have had secure door entry systems completed, but there are still 200 blocks in the west of the city that require completion.
- 2) Agrees that tenants waiting for the secure door entry systems have the same requirement for safety as those who have already had their door entry systems upgraded.
- 3) Agrees that there should be fair treatment across the City.
- 4) Agrees to continue with the rollout of Door entry systems in the remaining 200 blocks.

- moved by Councillor Bruce, seconded by Councillor Mowat

At this point in the meeting, Amendment 1 and Amendment 2 were withdrawn.

Voting

The voting was as follows:

For the motion - 2 votes

For Amendment 3 - 9 votes

(For the motion: Councillors Meagher and Pogson.

For Amendment 3: Councillors Bruce, Caldwell, Dobbin, Flannery, Hyslop, Key, Mowat, Parker and Rae.)

Decision

To approve the amendment by Councillor Bruce.

(References – Act of Council No. 4 of 23 February 2023; Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 9 March 2023 (item 5); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

13. Damp, Mould, and Condensation in Council Homes Update

An update was provided on the progress made to date in implementing the actions in the Dampness and Mould Service Improvement Plan and the current operational performance in dealing with reports of damp and mould in Council tenants' homes.

Motion

- 1) To note the update on the progress made with the actions in the Dampness, Preservation and Mould Service Improvement Plan.
- 2) To note that a further update would be provided to Committee in six months.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

Amendment

- 1) To note the update on the progress made with the actions in the Dampness, Preservation and Mould Service Improvement Plan.
- 2) To note that a further update would be provided to Committee in six months.
- 3) Thanks officers for the significant progress outlined and requests that after the 6- month update to the initial improvement plan, that a report, including Appendix 2 (performance), 3 (heatmap) and 5 (complaints) data, recurs annually on the committee work programme.
- 4) Notes the ambition to reduce delays by employing more specialist contractors, and that the UK Housing Ombudsman's 2021 report recommendation of less reliance on tenants reporting and chasing up delayed repairs as well as the Edinburgh Poverty Commission's emphasis on proactive support. Therefore, requests the recurring annual report requested above in 1 also outlined how proactive steps were taken to monitor missed or delayed repairs and complex cases, due to the feeling of helplessness and further health issues this can create for tenants.
- 5) Requests the Convenor write to the UK Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, as well as the Scottish Government's Local Government and Housing Directorate, to express committee's support for a national programme for home insulation, which may assist with sustainability of the improvement plan and EESSH(2) targets going forward.

- moved by Councillor Caldwell, seconded by Councillor Flannery

In accordance with Standing Order 22(12), the amendment was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To note the update on the progress made with the actions in the Dampness, Preservation and Mould Service Improvement Plan.
- 2) To note that a further update would be provided to Committee in six months.
- 3) To thank officers for the significant progress outlined and request that after the 6- month update to the initial improvement plan, a report, including Appendix 2 (performance), 3 (heatmap) and 5 (complaints) data, recurred annually on the committee work programme.
- 4) To note the ambition to reduce delays by employing more specialist contractors, and the UK Housing Ombudsman's 2021 report recommendation of less reliance on tenants reporting and chasing up delayed repairs as well as the Edinburgh Poverty Commission's emphasis on proactive support. Therefore, to request the recurring annual report requested above also outlined how proactive steps would be taken to monitor missed or delayed repairs and complex cases, due to the feeling of helplessness and further health issues this could create for tenants.
- 5) To request the Convener would write to the UK Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, as well as the Scottish Government's Local Government and Housing Directorate, to express committee's support for a national programme for home insulation, which may assist with sustainability of the improvement plan and EESSH(2) targets going forward.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 9 May 2023 (item 7); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

14. Housing Service Repairs – Benchmarking Report

In response to a decision by committee on 9 May 2023, officers presented an analysis and benchmarking of spinal column pay against other local authorities and the private sector workforce in Edinburgh for trade operative posts.

Decision

- 1) To note the report by the Executive Director of Place.
- 2) To note that the report was based on 13 respondents, including nine other Councils from a total of 31 surveyed.
- 3) To note that amongst the respondents to the survey, the Council benchmarked very highly when it came to wider terms and conditions of employment, including pension entitlement and sick pay, and was broadly comparable for salaries when viewed as an hourly rate.
- 4) To note that challenges in recruiting to trade operative roles were not considered to be the result of the Council offering less favourable terms and conditions, as the responses indicate this is not the case. Rather, there were

recruitment challenges across the housing/ construction sectors due to high demand and skills shortages.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 9 May 2023; report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

15. Housing Service Improvement Plan – Six-monthly Update

An update was provided on the Housing Service Improvement Plan (HSIP) over the most recent six-monthly period.

Motion

To note the progress made with the Housing Service Improvement Plan over the previous six months.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

Amendment

- 1) To note the progress made with the Housing Service Improvement Plan over the previous six months.
- 2) To note the work ongoing related to voids and repairs and requests information about how circular economy principles are embedded in this work, either through future, routine updates / reporting in the HSIP (and the performance dashboard) or initially via a separate briefing / discussion.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Rae

In accordance with Standing Order 22(12), the amendment was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

Decision

- 1) To note the progress made with the Housing Service Improvement Plan over the previous six months.
- 2) To note the work ongoing related to voids and repairs and to request information about how circular economy principles were embedded in this work, either through future, routine updates / reporting in the HSIP (and the performance dashboard) or initially via a separate briefing / discussion.

(References – Housing and Economy Committee, 6 June 2019 (item 10); Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 9 March 2023 (item 18) and 4 August 2022 (item 5); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

16. Family and Household Support Service

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Details were provided on the work of the Family and Household Support Service, in response to a motion by Councillor Meagher on 8 August 2023.

Decision

- 1) To note the content of the report by the Executive Director of Place.
- 2) To agree that a member briefing session on the work of the Family and Household Support Service would be arranged.
- 3) To agree that a future report on performance be brought to the Committee annually.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 8 August 2023 (item 15); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

17. Homelessness Statutory Returns

A summary was provided of the homelessness services statutory returns for the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022. This included comparisons to Glasgow with regards to temporary accommodation, as requested by Committee.

Decision

To note the report by the Executive Director of Place.

(Reference – Report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

18. Homelessness Services' Performance Dashboard

The Council's Internal Audit service recommended that Homelessness Services, in addition to providing an annual report on the service's statutory returns, should provide additional performance information to Committee. Details were provided of data related to the last quarter of 2022/23 and the first quarter of 2023/24. Data was also provided for comparison with the previous year and 2019/20 as per the request of Committee.

Decision

- 1) To note the content of the performance dashboard for quarter 4 of 2022/23 and quarter 1 of 2023/24.
- 2) To agree to remove measure 30 as the Covid-19 isolation unit was no longer in use.
- 3) To agree to remove measure 8 as Edinburgh Help to Rent had now ended.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 9 March 2023 (item 19); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

19. By Councillor Flannery – Student Homelessness Response

The following motion was submitted by Councillor Flannery in terms of Standing Order 17:

“Committee Notes

- 1) The productive meeting, as requested in Paragraph 5 of in 8.2 Student Homelessness Crisis on 7 September on Student Homelessness and Housing at the City Chambers between representatives from Council, Student Union, Housing Co-Op, Slurp and the four Edinburgh Universities to foster a strong partnership to tackle this.
- 2) The positive actions from this meeting including an urgent request to the Scottish Government to publish the PBSA Findings Review, previously agreed also at the City of Edinburgh Council on 22 of June 2023.
- 3) Welcomes the University of Edinburgh’s guarantee for accommodation for first year, one-year post-graduate students, but believes this should extend to Post-Graduate Research Students, also. Also requests publication of student numbers for Years 2, 3, 4, who could be at risk from homelessness.
- 4) To endorse Slurp’s Request to Universities for an emergency guarantee against Student Homelessness; that still needs to tackle potential student homelessness in years two, three and four, and that this guarantee, as above, should apply equally to Post-Graduate Research Students.

Requests therefore:

- 5) The Convener to write to stakeholders from this meeting to agree a partnership-direction and timeframe to support communication, data access, and early interventions to mitigate homelessness potential in the student population.
- 6) Officers review edinburgh.gov.uk and particularly the ‘Report It’ page journey to ensure adequate signposting is available to report homelessness or concerns with an HMO property.”

- moved by Councillor Flannery, seconded by Councillor Caldwell

Decision

To approve the motion by Councillor Flannery.

20. By Councillor Parker – Temporary Accommodation for Asylum Seekers and ‘hotel maximisation’ Policy Change

The following motion was submitted by Councillor Parker in terms of Standing Order 17:

“Committee:

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- 1) Condemns the UK government's "hotel maximisation policy" which will mean that unrelated, asylum-seeking adults will be forced to room share in temporary accommodation and notes that, in Edinburgh, this will be in place at the Learmonth and Piries Hotels.
- 2) Notes the significant safeguarding concerns associated with this policy as well as the serious negative impact it will have on the welfare of people seeking asylum.
- 3) Notes with significant concern the likely impact the policy will have on health and social care services, including the NHS, and condemns the UK government for failing to work with local authority partners to prepare for this before implementing this policy change.
- 4) Further notes the likely impact of the policy on homelessness services, with a likely increase in the number of homelessness presentations resulting from this.
- 5) Considers the latest policy to be yet another example of a morally bankrupt UK government demonstrating total disregard for the rights and welfare of refugees and asylum seekers, and condemns in the strongest possible terms actions by politicians and the far-right to create a "hostile environment" and stoke a culture war against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Therefore, requests that the Convener and Council Leader:

- 6) Write to the UK Government outlining opposition to the "hotel maximisation policy" and set out the challenges the local authority will face when implementing it.
- 7) Write to the relevant Scottish Government ministers seeking funding to mitigate the impact of the changes and raise through the appropriate channels at CoSLA.

Finally:

- 8) Requests that officers provide routine updates about the impact of the policy change via the usual reporting schedules for this Committee, and to consider – in consultation with Councillors - if additional reporting about these changes and the wider provision of housing and support for refugees and asylum seekers in the city, including those with no recourse to public funds, is appropriate."

Motion

To approve the motion by Councillor Parker.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Rae

Amendment 1

“Committee

Deletes:

The section of Paragraph 1 after “accommodation” and inserts full stop.

Inserts in place:

‘Two hotels in Edinburgh are hosting asylum seekers as part of the UK Government’s refugee strategy.’

Inserts

‘5 b) ‘Reaffirms that Edinburgh is a welcoming city for refugees, and is willing to work with the UK government, Scottish government, and other partner agencies to promote and develop support based on liberty, dignity and safety for individuals fleeing war and persecution, and notes the recent positive examples of Ukrainian and Syrian refugees making Edinburgh their home through these support mechanisms.’

Inserts

‘7 b) Requests the Convenor takes appropriate steps to liaise with both the two hotels and relevant Council departments and seek assurance on how safeguarding and health standards are being met in asylum accommodation in light of the June 2023 UK Government policy update. Requests any assurances are reported via a business bulletin update no later than 3 cycles.

- moved by Councillor Caldwell, seconded by Councillor Flannery

Amendment 2

To take no action on the motion by Councillor Parker.

- moved by Councillor Bruce, seconded by Councillor Mowat

In accordance with Standing Order 22(12), Amendment 1 was accepted as an amendment to the motion.

Voting

The voting was as follows:

For the motion - 8 votes

For Amendment 2 - 2 votes

(For the motion: Councillors Caldwell, Dobbin, Flannery, Hyslop, Meagher, Parker, Pogson and Rae.

For Amendment 2: Councillors Bruce and Mowat.)

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Flannery:

- 1) To condemn the UK government's "hotel maximisation policy" which would mean that unrelated, asylum-seeking adults would be forced to room share in temporary accommodation. Two hotels in Edinburgh were hosting asylum seekers as part of the UK Government's refugee strategy.
- 2) To note the significant safeguarding concerns associated with this policy as well as the serious negative impact it will have on the welfare of people seeking asylum.
- 3) To note with significant concern the likely impact the policy would have on health and social care services, including the NHS, and to condemn the UK government for failing to work with local authority partners to prepare for this before implementing this policy change.
- 4) To further note the likely impact of the policy on homelessness services, with a likely increase in the number of homelessness presentations resulting from this.
- 5) To consider the latest policy to be yet another example of a morally bankrupt UK government demonstrating total disregard for the rights and welfare of refugees and asylum seekers, and to condemn in the strongest possible terms actions by politicians and the far-right to create a "hostile environment" and stoke a culture war against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- 6) To reaffirm that Edinburgh was a welcoming city for refugees, and was willing to work with the UK government, Scottish government, and other partner agencies to promote and develop support based on liberty, dignity and safety for individuals fleeing war and persecution, and note the recent positive examples of Ukrainian and Syrian refugees making Edinburgh their home through these support mechanisms.
- 7) Therefore, to request that the Convener and Council Leader write to:
 - the UK Government outlining opposition to the "hotel maximisation policy" and set out the challenges the local authority will face when implementing it.
 - the relevant Scottish Government ministers seeking funding to mitigate the impact of the changes and raise through the appropriate channels at CoSLA
- 8) To request the Convener took appropriate steps to liaise with both the two hotels and relevant Council departments and sought assurance on how safeguarding and health standards were being met in asylum accommodation in light of the June 2023 UK Government policy update. To request any assurances be reported via a business bulletin update no later than 3 cycles.
- 9) To request that officers provide routine updates about the impact of the policy change via the usual reporting schedules for this Committee, and to consider – in consultation with Councillors - if additional reporting about these changes and the wider provision of housing and support for refugees and asylum

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seekers in the city, including those with no recourse to public funds, was appropriate.