

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday 20 January 2022

Present

Councillors Kate Campbell (Convener), Watt (Vice-Convener), Jim Campbell, Child (substituting for Councillor Day), Key, Lang, McLellan, Rae, Staniforth, Webber (items 1(b) onwards) and Work.

1. Deputations

a) Deputation by the Moredun Maisonettes and Multis Residents Association

The Committee agreed to hear a deputation from Moredun Maisonettes and Multis Residents Association in relation to the Update on Dampness, Mould and Condensation in Council Homes and Asset Management Strategy report and the Tenant Participation and Community Engagement report. Councillor Cameron was also in attendance as a ward councillor.

The deputation detailed the ongoing issues living in the Moredun high rise flats since their last deputation, including those of mould, damp and condensation, the disrepair of AOVs and home owners being requested to pay an £8k for repairs, experiences of fuel poverty and lack of communication from the Council.

The deputation requested that the Council conducted more outreach with Council tenants and that the concerns raised were addressed.

b) Deputation by the Gilmerton Inch Community Council

The Committee agreed to hear a deputation from Gilmerton Inch Community Council in relation to the Update on Dampness, Mould and Condensation in Council Homes and Asset Management Strategy report and the Tenant Participation and Community Engagement report. Councillor Cameron was also in attendance as a ward councillor.

The deputation raised concerns regarding a newsletter which outlined estimated costs for common repair works which had caused stress amongst the residents of the Moredun flats. Health and safety concerns regarding the damp and condensation were also raised, as well as the strains of fuel poverty on residents. Communication from the Council had been perceived to be poor.

The deputation requested that more communication was provided on full costs and future phases of work and to provide assistance to tenants who were struggling with paying their heating bills until repair work was completed.

Decision

To note the deputations.

2. Update on Dampness, Mould and Condensation in Council Homes and Asset Management Strategy

On 3 June 2021, the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee agreed an improved process to manage issues of dampness, mould and condensation in Council homes and requested an update in six months.

An update was provided on progress with implementing the new process and, following an early review, on the recommendations that were being taken forward to improve the process. An update was also provided on the development of an asset management strategy.

Decision

- 1) To note the update on the improvements that had been put in place to manage dampness, mould and condensation issues.
- 2) To note the details of the early review which was carried out and that recommendations were being taken forward to improve the process.
- 3) To note the update on the development of an asset management strategy.
- 4) To agree to set up a follow up meeting to discuss the issues raised by the deputations which would feed into an action plan.
- 5) To request a briefing note on work being done to assist tenants experiencing financial difficulty and fuel poverty.
- 6) To request a briefing session on assistance for owner occupiers regarding communal repair works.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 3 June 2021 (Item 1); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

3. Tenant Participation and Community Engagement

Agreement was sought for the Edinburgh Tenants' Federation (ETF) to be funded for a further two years from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024 and the Neighbourhood Alliance (NA) for one year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 to support tenant participation and engagement.

The funding for both organisations would be subject to ongoing evidence being provided of delivery of the set outputs, outcomes and improvement actions. Initiatives to support the delivery of Tenant Participation Strategy (TPS) 2020-2023 objectives, areas of improvement and specific actions relevant to each organisation were set out in separate Service Level Agreements (SLAs). The SLAs would be closely monitored and reviewed on a six-monthly basis

Decision

- 1) To agree to fund the ETF for a further two years to 31 March 2024, on a maximum standstill budget of £241,083 per annum.
- 2) To agree to fund the NA for a further year up to 31 March 2023 on a maximum standstill budget of £67,200 per annum.
- 3) To note that the funding for both organisations would be released in six-monthly instalments, subject to evidence of delivery against key outputs, outcomes and improvement actions as set in the SLAs.
- 4) To approve the approach to the Tenant Scrutiny Framework, which had been developed in conjunction with ETF and the Tenant Information Service (TIS), to support the delivery of the TPS 2020-2023 objectives and effective scrutiny by tenants on the performance of Council services.

(References – Leadership Advisory Panel of 31 March 2020 (Item 7); Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 20 January 2020 (Item 7); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

4. Minutes

Decision

To approve the minute of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 4 November 2021 as a correct record.

5. Work Programme

The Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee Work Programme for January 2022 was presented.

Decision

To note the Work Programme.

(Reference – Work Programme, submitted.)

6. Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee Rolling Actions Log

The Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee Rolling Actions Log for January 2022 was presented.

Decision

- 1) To agree to close the following actions:
 - Action 3 – Housing Sustainability Update
 - Action 4 – Housing Service Improvement Plan – Repairs Update
 - Action 5 (1 & 2) – Approach to Dampness, Mould and Condensation in Council Homes
 - Action 6 – 2022/23 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Consultation

- Action 9 – The City of Edinburgh Council’s Annual Assurance Statement on Housing Services
- Action 11 – Internal Audit: Overdue Findings and Key Performance Indicators as at 11 August 2021

2) To otherwise note the remaining outstanding actions.

(Reference – Rolling Actions Log, submitted.)

7. Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee Business Bulletin

The Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee Business Bulletin for January 2022 was presented.

Decision

To note the Business Bulletin.

(Reference – Business Bulletin, submitted.)

8. Network of Employability Support and Training

Approval was sought to award funding for a replacement Network of Employability Support and Training (NEST) that would provide person-centred support and complement Edinburgh’s current employability services.

Decision

- 1) To note the purpose and context of the NEST programme.
- 2) To approve the award of third party grants to the services detailed in Appendix 3, up to a maximum value of £936,421.
- 3) To note that officers would work with the successful applicants to develop delivery plans for their programmes which it was anticipated could result in some additional funding being released and that there could also potentially be other funding available from Scottish Government which could be used to supplement this fund.
- 4) To approve that the applications listed in Appendix 4 be progressed, up to a maximum value of £217,228.89 should additional funding become available, and to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Convener, Vice Convener and Group Spokespeople, to confirm the allocation of funding.
- 5) To note the third party grants applications which were not recommended for award of funding.
- 6) To approve a direct award of up to £250,000 to Capital City Partnership (CCP) for establishing a Vocational Training Framework as the vocational training part of the NEST.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Committee of 2 September 2021 (Item 6); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

9. Employer Recruitment Incentives to Support Fair Work

Details were provided on the delivery of the Edinburgh's Employer Recruitment Incentive (EERI) offer and how the Council would ensure it would meet the needs of employers and individuals while also supporting Edinburgh's ambition to be a Living Wage City.

Decision

- 1) To note the change to Edinburgh's Employer Recruitment Incentive (EERI) for those aged over 25 years. Employers would now require to pay Real Living Wage (RLW) or above to be eligible.
- 2) To note that, where an employer was not paying RLW to young people under 25, EERI funding would now only be awarded to employers where the offer was for an official apprenticeship or where the individual would obtain a recognised industry qualification.
- 3) To agree that Officers should investigate the possibility of a 'Bursary' to support young people most disadvantaged and living in poverty to take up Modern Apprenticeship opportunities and report back to Committee within two cycles.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 2 September 2021 (Item 5); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

10. Housing Service Improvement Plan – Update

An update was provided on the work being taken forward as part of the Housing Service Improvement Plan (HSIP) and the actions planned for the next six months. The measures set out in the improvement plan aimed to significantly improve tenant satisfaction, operating performance and reduce costs.

Decision

- 1) To note the progress made with the Housing Service Improvement Plan (HSIP) over the last six months and the forward plan.
- 2) To agree to receive an update report in six months.
- 3) To request a joint briefing session between the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee and the Culture and Communities Committee on measures to tackle antisocial behaviour.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 3 June 2021 (Item 11); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

11. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Strategy (2022-32)

In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Council approved a one year rent freeze in 2021/22, whilst still supporting the £2.8 billion 10-year capital investment programme and £1.3 billion revenue programme. The mitigations required to continue to deliver the long-term investment plan were set out in a report to Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee in March 2021.

The 30-year Business Plan was reviewed each year and assumptions updated and a rent strategy developed for consultation with tenants. This year's consultation set out five rent options ranging from a 5% increase to 1.8% in 2022/23. The 2022/23 rent consultation ran for 12 weeks, with the majority of tenants supporting a 1.8% rent increase. The proposed inflation rent increase was considered to be the lowest possible in a context of rising costs and economic uncertainty that impact on delivery of day to day housing management and maintenance services, as well as, delivery of key Council commitments.

Motion

- 1) To recognise the cost of living crisis, with the cut to Universal Credit of £20 a week; the increase in National Insurance contributions which would begin 1st April 2022, and which was the most regressive form of taxation, disproportionately affecting those on the lowest incomes; the increase in energy costs and the self-imposed Welfare Cap, introduced by the Conservative UK Government.
- 2) To note the underspend in capital expenditure, arising from slippage in the capital programme which had been caused by restrictions due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.
- 3) To note the outcome of the annual rent consultation with the majority of tenants supporting a 1.8% rent increase in 2022/23. However, in view of the cost of living crisis, which had only become fully apparent after the consultation with tenants, to recommend a zero increase in council rents during the coming year.
- 4) To note the outcome of the annual review of the Business Plan and based on a 1.8% rent increase in 2022/23 (2% per annum thereafter) this would enable a £2.9 billion ten-year investment programme to deliver Council commitments, including 10,000 new affordable homes by 2027 and net zero carbon by 2038 (eight years later than originally planned).
- 5) To note that freezing rent for a second year in a row would either require higher rent increases in future years or the withdrawal/reduction of housing services or a reduction in investment in new and existing homes or a combination of all. To therefore, ask officers to provide an amended proposal incorporating the rent rises needed during the following four years to compensate for the loss of rent income in the coming year in addition to other budget scenarios they had prepared.
- 6) To note the risks to the delivery of the plan set out in Appendix 3 and that officers would continue to work with Scottish Government to maximise grant funding for both the new build programme and the transition to net zero carbon to support delivery of the 2030 net zero target and to keep rents affordable.
- 7) To note that approval would be sought from Finance and Resources Committee and the Council on the draft ten-year capital investment programme and proposed 2022/23 rent increase. To ask that the Finance and Resources Committee were provided with the amended proposal outlined at action points 3 and 5 above.

- moved by Councillor Kate Campbell, seconded by Councillor Watt

Amendment

- 1) To note the outcome of the annual rent consultation with the majority of tenants supporting a 1.8% rent increase in 2022/23. However, in view of the cost of living crisis, which had only become fully apparent after the consultation with tenants, to recommend a zero increase in council rents during the coming year.
- 2) To note the outcome of the annual review of the Business Plan and based on a 1.8% rent increase in 2022/23 (2% per annum thereafter) this would enable a £2.9 billion ten-year investment programme to deliver Council commitments, including 10,000 new affordable homes by 2027 and net zero carbon by 2038 (eight years later than originally planned).
- 3) To note that freezing rent for a second year in a row would either require higher rent increases in future years or the withdrawal/reduction of housing services or a reduction in investment in new and existing homes or a combination of all. To therefore, ask officers to provide an amended proposal incorporating the rent rises needed during the following four years to compensate for the loss of rent income in the coming year in addition to other budget scenarios they had prepared.
- 4) To note the risks to the delivery of the plan set out in Appendix 3 and that officers would continue to work with Scottish Government to maximise grant funding for both the new build programme and the transition to net zero carbon to support delivery of the 2030 net zero target and to keep rents affordable.
- 5) To note that approval would be sought from Finance and Resources Committee and the Council on the draft ten-year capital investment programme and proposed 2022/23 rent increase. To ask that the Finance and Resources Committee were provided with the amended proposal outlined at action points 1 and 3 above.

- moved by Councillor Jim Campbell, seconded by Councillor McLellan

Voting

For the motion - 8 votes
For the amendment - 3 votes

(For the motion – Councillors Kate Campbell, Child, Key, Lang, Rae, Staniforth, Watt and Work.

For the amendment – Councillors Jim Campbell, McLellan and Webber.)

Decision

To approve the motion by Councillor Kate Campbell.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 18 March 2021 (item 6); of 2 September 2021 (Item 8); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

12. Place Directorate - Revenue Monitoring - 2021/22 Month Six Position

The month six revenue monitoring position was set out for the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Place Directorate General Fund (GF) for services within the scope of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee.

Decision

- 1) To note that the HRA was forecasting a contribution of £12.437m to the Strategic Investment Fund from revenue generated in year as part of the capital investment programme funding strategy.
- 2) To note that the Place GF 'business as usual' revenue budget forecast was projecting a £0.443m overspend (excluding Covid-19 impact) at month six. Services within the remit of the Committee were forecasting an overspend of £0.250m.
- 3) To note the Place GF Covid-19 impact was projected to cost £12.423m at month six. Services within the remit of the Committee were forecasting a cost of £0.400m which was in line with provision made within the approved budget.

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

13. Homelessness and Housing Support - Revenue Monitoring 2021/22 – Month Six Position

The 2021/22 projected month six revenue monitoring position for the Homelessness and Housing Support service was set out, based on analysis of actual expenditure and income to the end of September 2021, and expenditure and income projections for the remainder of the financial year.

Decision

- 1) To note a net residual budget pressure of £2.8m for the Homelessness and Housing Support service at month six.
- 2) To note the potential recurring aspects of this in-year pressure.

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

14. Place Services Internal Audit – Actions Update

The Internal Audit Actions Update sat alongside the referral report from the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee on 14 December 2021 on overdue findings. An update was provided on progress on management actions arising from Internal Audits which specifically relate to services which fall within the remit of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee.

Decision

To note the progress made on the overdue Internal Audit management actions relating to the Housing Property and Homelessness services and the audit actions, which had

been agreed corporately, and which services which sit within the remit of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work committee were working on.

(References – Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee, 14 December 2021 (item 5); Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 20 January 2022 (Item 14); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

15. Internal Audit: Overdue Findings and Key Performance Indicators as at 5 November 2021 – referral from the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee had referred a report on Internal Audit Overdue Findings and Key Performance Indicators as at 5 November 2021, which confirmed the three-month completion date extension agreed by the GRBV Committee in September 2021 had been applied to all open and overdue agreed management actions, with revised dates reflected. The report was referred to the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee for ongoing scrutiny of relevant overdue management actions.

Decision

To note the report.

(Reference – Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee, 14 December 2021 (item 5); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

16. Affordable Housing Policy Update – referral from the Planning Committee

The Planning Committee had referred a report which compared delivery of affordable homes through the Affordable Housing Policy (AHP) to housing need figures (estimated in the last Housing Need and Demand Assessment) and addressed the request for an assessment of all homes delivered by this policy in the last three years, to the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee for information.

Decision

To note the report.

(References – Planning Committee of 1 December 2021 (item 4); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

17. Housing Land Audit and Completions Programme 2021 – referral from the Planning Committee

The Planning Committee had referred a report which summarised findings of the 2021 annual Housing Land Audit and Completions Programme, to the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee for information.

Decision

To note the report.

(References – Planning Committee of 1 December 2021 (item 5); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)