



# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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## HOUSING COMMITTEE

14 September 2021

7.00 - 9.00 pm

Council Chamber - SDC

### Minutes

#### Membership

##### **Councillor Mattie Ross (Chair)**

Councillor Paula Baker  
Councillor Colin Fryer  
Councillor Lindsey Green  
Councillor Nicholas Housden  
Councillor Laurie Davies

\*= Absent

##### **Councillor Christopher Jockel (Vice-Chair)**

Councillor Steve Hynd  
Councillor Jenny Miles  
Councillor Loraine Patrick  
Councillor Lucas Schoemaker  
\* Councillor Katrina Davis \*

#### Officers in Attendance

Accountancy Manager  
Principal Accountant  
Senior Democratic Services &  
Elections Officer  
Corporate Policy and Governance  
Manager

Strategic Director of Communities  
Head of Contract Services  
Democratic Services & Elections Officer  
Head of Housing Services

#### Other Member(s) in Attendance

Councillors Cornell

#### Tenant Representatives

Becky Adams  
Carole Wise (Deputy)

Mike Richter

#### HC.14 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davis and Davies

#### HC.15 Declaration of Interests

There were none.

**HC.16**      **Minutes**

With agreement from Committee it was confirmed that the following would be amended in the minutes:

- HC.005 - resolution should have said 'recommend to council' instead of 'resolved'.
- HC.007 – the last paragraph, second line down should have stated leads instead of needs 'which then leads to overflowing'.

**RESOLVED That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2021 were approved subject to the amendments listed above.**

**HC.17**      **Public Question Time**

There were none.

**HC.18**      **Members' Questions**

Members questions were submitted. They were answered by the Chair (Refer to the [Council's recording](#) and [Agenda Item 12](#)).

**HC.19**      **Budget Monitoring 2021/22 - Quarter 1 Report**

The Principal Accountant presented the report to the Committee and summarised the General Fund revenue budget and General Fund Capital Programme positions outlined in Section 3, Table 1 and Section 4, Table 2.

The Principal Accountant summarised the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget position. They stated that there was a projected net overspend of £352k and drew Committees attention to some of the larger variances which included:

- 5.3 showed a loss of income £260k this was due to the higher level of voids
- 5.4 – Supervision and Management £230k underspend due to vacant posts which will fluctuate through the year as positions are filled. The underspend £37k for IT software was also highlighted however the new housing IT system would be due for implementation later in the year.
- 5.5 Repairs and maintenance underspend of £185k.
- Void costs were expected to be higher due to the increase in Council tax.
- £85k overspend in property care mainly due to the use of subcontractors for specialist roles (roofing and drainage).
- Expenditure £52k overspend mostly due to fly-tipping and contaminated waste.
- Independent living and modernisation – £62k overspend this was due to delays caused by Covid-19.

The Principal Accountant also introduced the HRA Capital Programme 2021/22 drawing attention to table 5.

Councillor Miles questioned the increase in payment for voids and empty properties and whether this would be resolved by the last quarter. The Head of Contract services stated it was predicted to be the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the next year before they catch up from the delays caused by Covid. It was explained that the team were doing a lot more in terms of delivery in order to work through the backlog and that they were looking at other options to further increase productivity.

Councillor Schoemaker proposed and Councillor Fryer seconded.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried.

**RESOLVED To note the outturn forecast for the General Fund and HRA Revenue budgets and Capital programmes for this Committee**

**HC.20      Options Appraisal - Decarbonisation and Energy Efficiency of Council Housing**

The Head of Contract Services introduced the report and explained that retrofit work had already been carried out however the report proposed to increase the speed and level of delivery. A lot of data cleansing work had been completed prior to selecting option two for recommendation. He drew attention to items 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 in the report which explained the efforts, reasoning and measures observed before concluding with the recommendation. The Head of Contract Services highlighted the importance the decision held in line with the 2030 strategy and informed the Committee that there was another wave of Government investment available, some of which he hoped could be secured for the Stroud District. He explained option two would be a good base to start with and would allow them to build on it further should further funding become available.

Councillor Baker asked for confirmation that option two was the most financially prudent option and that there would be regular reviews for additional funding, she also asked whether they could revert to another option if further funding or opportunities arose. The Head of Contract Services confirmed, that option two was achievable and sustainable and if they could do more they would.

In reply to members' questions over the behavioural and lifestyle changes required to ensure efficiency, the Head of Contract Services explained that the behaviour changes were mentioned in the appendices of the report. This detailed that there had been a post created for a 'tenant liaison carbon reduction officer' to support the tenants through the changes and assist with any behavioural and lifestyle queries they had. He further explained that whilst they would educate the tenants how their changes would make a difference; they could not force a behavioural change.

In response to further questions the Head of Contract Services confirmed that:

- The successful bid mentioned in item 4.2 of the report yielded just over £400,000 funding for the project.
- The decarbonisation project had started 4 years ago in 2017 and would be achievable by 2030.
- The houses with the lowest SAP rating would be completed first.
- An estimated 65 properties wouldn't be able to achieve a SAP C rating however, that didn't mean that they weren't completely thermally insufficient.

Councillor Fryer raised concerns about charging higher rent on new builds and relet. The Head of Contract services explained that the work needed to be done and paid for and that paragraph 2.6 contained a few of the options which could be considered. Grant options were a great way to receive funding however, these were unknown and could not be relied upon for steady income.

Councillor Housden asked for confirmation whether CN2030 referred to carbon neutral and if so, was this achievable by 2030. The Head of Contract Services stated that the strategy refers to making the district as carbon neutral as possible and that we needed to play our part in helping to achieve this.

Councillor Jockel enquired as to what the key external factors were which enabled Stroud District Council to achieve full carbon neutrality by 2030. The Head of Contract Services answered with the following:

- Stock and stock type
- Embodied energy to build and maintain new builds
- Income
- Investment.

In response to a question from Councillor Hynd the Head of Contract Services advised that he would collate and circulate the figures regarding carbon savings achieved since the start of the project.

Councillor Housden questioned whether the council had looked at options to set up own their own housing association. The Chair responded that this request had been spoken of on previous occasion and was not popular with the tenants. She stated that tenant engagement was crucial.

Councillor Baker proposed and Councillor Fryer Seconded.

Councillor Hynd expressed his support for the report and advised that it was clear that Members wanted to help decarbonise the housing stock but it needed to be done in a fiscally responsible way which the option put forward in the report allows. Councillor Schoemaker stated that this project needed to be a flagship project with publicity to help a behaviour change throughout the whole district.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

- RESOLVED a. Adopt Option 2, that by 2030 the average energy efficiency rating across all Council housing stock will be SAP C and;**
- b. Request the Housing Committee Retrofit Task and Finish Group consider the necessary programme delivery requirements, including tenant consultation and resource scheduling, and report back to committee in December 2021**

## **HC.21      Response to the Social Housing White Paper**

The Head of Housing Services introduced the report explaining the paper outlined Stroud District Council's response to the charter for social housing residents shown in Appendix B and that part of the works for the installation of fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors had already begun. As part of the renewal of the existing smoke detectors, they were being replaced by new combined smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors. The Head of Housing Services drew attention to the tenant feedback which ranged from mixed to generally positive. He explained the new task and finish groups covering

resident involvement, voids and repairs and energy retrofit had now been set up. He also informed the committee of the newly appointed Change Agent.

The Head of Housing Services spoke of the newly proposed Tenant Representatives and Deputy Tenant Representatives which was a huge step to improve tenant engagement. He further explained there was no timetable for delivery of the Social Housing White Paper and some of the proposals within the report required more engagement, consultation and legislation.

In a response to a question from Councillor Miles the Head of Housing Services advised that they would be looking at the wider district to find what global issues were affecting tenants and that resident engagement would be required.

Questions were taken from Councillor Fryer on the resources and capabilities to provide a services to tenants and deal with any communication issues between tenants and the Council. The Head of Housing Services acknowledged they needed to find a balance between sending officers out on site and having the resources available to answer the phones. He informed the committee that the fit for the future programme was working alongside services to improve call handling. The Head of Housing Services also explained that this was something the new task and finish groups were looking into and they would report back to the Committee with their findings.

In response to Councillor Green, the Head of Housing Services explained the reason the actions in the report hadn't been completed already was due to a large reduction in posts particularly in resident engagement at the council approximately 4 years ago. A lot of extra work was given to the Neighbourhood Management Officers (NMOs) which needed to be re-addressed in order to get them back to being dedicated officers for tenants, which is what the fit for the future programme was doing.

The Head of Housing Services responded to Councillors Patricks' concerns over the Out of Hours service (OOH), he acknowledged the issues that took place last year and advised that the Head of Contract Services had been working hard to ensure the issues had been addressed. The Chair advised that a full enquiry into the OOH service last year had been carried out actions would be taken to rectify the problems.

In response to Councillor Baker, the Head of Housing Services confirmed there were approximately 1000 properties per NMO, each NMO had a fixed patch and that tenants should know who their NMO is so that they contact them with any issues however further work could be done in this area.

Councillor Fryer proposed and Councillor Hynd seconded.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED To agree that the Head of Housing Services work with the cross party Resident Involvement Task and Finish group to:**

- a) **Draft Stroud District's Tenants Charter**
- b) **Draft Stroud District's Tenant Empowerment and Engagement strategy**
- c) **Coordinate consultation on the proposed Tenant satisfaction measures, and bring recommendations back to this Committee**

## **HC.22      Draft Council Plan**

The Chair introduced the report and explained that it was a critical document for the Council as it set out the priorities and objectives for the following 5 years. She explained that the plan was built on three tiers:

- 3 principle priorities which were Environment and Climate Change, Community Resilience and Wellbeing and Economy, Recovery and Regeneration
- Between 5 - 6 Strategic objectives under each of the priorities
- Delivery plan which included the activity the Council would undertake to achieve the objectives.

The Chair informed the committee that the plan had been developed in consultation with all services, the Strategic Leadership Team, lead officers and alliance Members. Each policy committee would also have the opportunity to review it before it was recommended to be ratified at Full Council in October.

In reply to members questions the Accountancy Manager confirmed the difference between Social and Affordable housing and stated that the report was referring to 'affordable' homes which covers all types of affordable homes including Affordable Rent, Social Rent and Shared Ownership.

Councillor Hynd proposed and Councillor Schoemaker seconded.

Councillor Hynd stated the plan was clearly laid out with clear lines of governance. Councillor Shchoemaker advised that it was an excellent basis for dialogue between Officers and Members and to see how the Council was progress and work round obstacles.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was carried.

**RESOLVED To RECOMMEND to Strategy & Resources Committee that the draft Council Plan is agreed and recommended to Council.**

## **HC.23      Progress Update on Key Action Plans (Cleaner Estates and Service Standards)**

The Head of Housing Services provided the Committee with a verbal update on the progress of the key action plans, he explained the cleaner estates action plan had already held 2 successful events and there were a further 6 events planned. He drew attention to the regeneration work that was taking place at Nouncells cross.

With regards the service standards action plan progress had been made which included the appointment of the tenant representatives and the deputy tenant representatives. They were in the process of creating the induction and training for the tenant representatives who were receiving mentoring from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). A focus group for Independent Living had been booked for 27 September 2021 which would be chaired by TPAS, 14 tenants had shown interest in this meeting. Involved tenants evening booked for 12 October where the Operations Manager would attend to talk about repairs. Volunteers would be needed for a variety of areas including:

- Scrutiny
- Green Champions
- Photographer
- Repairs and Voids inspectors
- Walkabouts
- Digital
- Consultation
- Annual Report

In response to a question from Councillor Hynd, the Head of Housing Services confirmed they were awaiting the KPI's from the action plans which information would need to come back from consultation before they could assign them to the action plans, this would come back to another meeting.

#### **HC.24      Member Reports**

##### a)      Housing Review Panel Update

The Chair spoke about the first meeting where they discussed the retrofit and explained the recording was available for members to view online. She also informed the committee that the next meeting was booked and representatives had been received from all political parties.

##### b)      Tenant Representatives

The proposed tenant representatives introduced themselves to the Committee.

#### **HC.25      Performance Monitoring**

The report was circulated prior to the meeting.

#### **HC.26      Work Programme**

An extraordinary meeting was added in November due to the large number of items in December and the items had been spread out across the new date.

Councillor Hynd questioned where the EC3.3 private sector decarbonisation fitted in with the current work programme the Strategic Director of Communities agreed that this could be looked at after the meeting.

**RESOLVED To note the work programme.**

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Chair