

## Secure Sub-committee

Tuesday, 24 September 2024

Present:

Councillors T Neira, R O'Keefe, Linda Bell, J Kirwin,  
J Mudzingwa, J Walker, J Day and N Huscroft

In attendance:

Councillors

Apologies: Councillors A Newman, Louise Bell and O Scargill

### **S8/24 Appointment of Substitute Members**

There were no substitute members appointed.

### **S9/24 Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor Claire McGinty declared a person and registerable interest in Item 4 as she currently owns and is renovating a property in Wallsend.

Councillor Patricia Neira declared a non-registerable personal interest in Item 5 as she is a tenant of the Local Authority.

Councillor Rebecca O'Keefe declared a non-registerable personal interest in Item 5 as she is a tenant of the Local Authority.

### **S10/24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 9 July 2024 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**S11/24 Affordable Homes Programme Update**

The Sub-committee received a report to update on the overall progress to deliver 5000 affordable homes and highlight the work ongoing in 2024-25.

The Our North Tyneside Plan was approved at full Council on 23 September 2021 and included a target of delivering 5000 affordable homes and a commitment to reduce the number of derelict properties in the borough. In order to meet the target Cabinet approved a two phased approach to the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) on 21 February 2022.

The Council has continued to make good progress towards its objectives and by the end of 2024-25 will have delivered over 2400 affordable homes including over 1400 new affordable homes through the HRA and the Council's wholly owned delivery vehicle.

The Sub-committee were advised that work is underway on the former West Farm Public House, Killingworth and work has commenced on site to build 22 new Council Homes. Also, the former Children's Home on Wellington Avenue, following a successful compulsory purchase order the property is currently being refurbished into new affordable homes with work due to be completed in the next few months.

The Authority's wholly owned subsidiary company, Aurora Affordable Homes currently owns 117 properties with a further 6 in the purchasing process.

The sub-committee were advised that as part of the roll out of the Private Sector Housing Improvement Plan a new Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme will be launched on 9 October at a landlord forum event in Wallsend. The Sub-committee were advised that a long-term problematic property in Charlotte Street, Wallsend has now been purchased as part of the Council's housing-led regeneration partnership with Aurora Affordable Homes. The property will be extensively refurbished and will be let as an affordable home when complete.

Thirty eight affordable homes have been delivered by private developers so far this year. It is forecast that a further 87 new affordable homes will be delivered through planning obligations in 2024/25.

Following the completion of the sale of the former Unicorn House site in North Shields to Karbon Homes, work continues to deliver the scheme that will provide 28 new affordable homes in North Shields town centre. Karbon will be acquiring 71 homes (56 Rent to Buy homes and 15 shared ownership) at Collingwood Grange, North Shields. This will be in addition to the 100 affordable homes already delivered on the site.

It was queried whether the target set in 2022 was a new target or if it was in addition to the target set in 2014. It was noted that the original target back in 2014 was 3000 homes, however, as officers have a good idea of when projects will come forward they are able to provide a good level of certainty on what can be delivered.

It was queried whether if the government requested that there be an increase in the number of affordable homes would North Tyneside have capacity to increase the number. It was noted that within the current 30 year business plan there isn't huge capacity it is fairly constrained. It was also noted that Registered Providers also have the same issue as if there is going to be more building they need more flexibility with regards to grant funding and rent setting. It was also noted that land supply is also a constraint.

It was queried about only 38 homes being built this year and whether or not that was a low number. It was noted that this number is in the financial year from April and we have just reached the end of Quarter 2.

It was queried whether with regards to affordable homes there is a way of controlling who buys these properties. It was noted that shared ownership is usually for first time buyers where over time they can increase the equity.

It was also noted that with regards to Discounted Open Market Sale Properties there is a financial limit on those and they change product to product. It was noted it is not a product for wealthy people.

It was also noted that those houses remain affordable in perpetuity.

It was noted that in the Local Plan it is stated the number of homes that will be built and out of those 20-25% will be affordable. This was put into the plan. It was also noted that there are planning restrictions in place for when developments

come to planning committee. It was also noted that when it comes to affordable rent there are measures in place.

RESOLVED – that the information presented in the report regarding the progress to deliver 5000 affordable homes be noted.

**S12/24 Repairs and Planned Maintenance Policy Condensation, Mould and Damp Policy**

The Sub-committee received a report on the proposals for the Repairs and Planned Maintenance Policy and the Condensation, Mould and Damp Policy.

The committee were advised that the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 received Royal Assent in July 2023 and aims to improve the regulation of social housing, with the key objectives of the Act being:

- Enhanced Regulation – it grants the Regulator of Social Housing increased powers to take proactive action against social landlords, even before tenants are at risk
- Tenant Protection – the Act introduces new consumer standards for social housing and mandates regular inspections to ensure landlords meet these standards
- Health and Safety – it includes provisions to address serious health hazards

in social housing such as damp and mould, inspired by the tragic cases of Grenfell Tower and Awaab Ishak

- Accountability – Social landlords are required to prepare and implement performance improvements plans if they fail to meet regulatory standards

Overall the Act is designed to ensure better quality and safer homes for residents, giving tenants greater powers and access to quick and fair solutions to problems. In April 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) introduced an inspection programme for social housing landlords, they also carried out multiple consultation exercises over recent months to gather views to help shape and inform the social housing sector going forward. This includes the strengthening of legislative and regulatory requirements.

Officers advised the sub-Committee that in order to support the Authority within the new regulatory regime and help set out service offer, a draft Repairs and Planned Maintenance Policy and a draft Condensation, Mould and Damp Policy have been developed and will be taken to Cabinet in November 2024.

The Repairs and Planned Maintenance Policy brings together the service approach to responsive repairs and planned maintenance into one document and sets out the legislative requirements the service must meet. It covers the responsive repairs service, cyclical works, housing investment, leasehold repairs, definitions and the responsibilities of the landlord and tenant.

The Condensation Mould and Damp Policy has been created following the publication of Housing Ombudsman (HO) Spotlight reports on damp and mould. The HO reports include recommendations that social housing landlords are expected to follow in their service approach and response to condensation, damp and mould.

The draft policy set out the aims, approach and response of the service, condensation, mould and damp definitions and the responsibilities of the landlord, tenant and leaseholder.

Both draft policies have been reviewed by tenants and revised to include comments received from them, engagement included written feedback and face-to-face meetings.

The Sub-committee were advised that 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) have been introduced, 12 measures are based on tenant perception and are gathered through the annual survey. The other 10 are performance or compliance focused measures.

Some of the changes which have been implemented are as follows:

- Video diagnosis has been introduced
- Literature has been reviewed and updated (for example the advice leaflets and the website)
- A dedicated resource has been added to the team (both surveyors and trades)
- Training has been developed and delivered across the teams
- Joint working is taking place with Energy and Healthy Homes Officers
- An internal audit has been completed

It was queried whether, when officers are in the process of undertaking the stock condition survey and it is found that a repair is needed what process is undertaken. It was noted that it may well be that something is found that falls into the responsive repairs element it is dealt with via that process. If a report is made we have surveyors who can go out, we also have an option to start a video call. It was also noted that we have damp experts sitting next to call handlers.

It was queried about the response to gas repairs and whether this was 24 hours. It was noted that during the summer months we have three days. It was noted that very few people are left over a weekend without heating or hot water. It was also noted that during the weekend there is an increase to the number of operatives on call.

It was queried with regards to the prevention of mould and moisture whether it was likely that there would be an increase due to the increase in cost of living, is it expected that it be busier.

It was noted that the cost of living will be impacting on tenants and private home owners. It was noted that the internal team has already been increased.

The sub-committee thought the leaflet with information on prevention of damp and mould and reporting details was really good and wanted to make sure it was

circulated widely. It was noted that this is available on the website and if the tenancy management team have them. It was noted that this could be shared with councillors. It was suggested that officers could look at doing a members comms session or briefing.

It was queried whether tenants would be charged if, for example, they had been given advice and remedial work had been done and they were continuing with the same ways of heating/drying clothes. It was noted that we have never charged anyone we are just trying to encourage people to ventilate their properties. It was also noted that our approach is very much proportionate to the situation.

It was queried with regards to the repairs policy and the target time of 45 days whether we think we are going to be able to clear any backlogs. It was noted that 94% of jobs are getting completed and it is never the case that we deliberately leave anything for 45 days. It was noted that currently there are no significant backlog of repairs.

The sub-committee **Resolved** to 1) note the information set out in the report regarding the policies; and 2) have their comments in relation to the two policies noted.

## **S13/24          Work Programme 2024-25**

The proposed work programme was discussed and the following was agreed.

For the meeting to take place on 3 December an item on Anti-Social Behaviour as highlighted:

Anti Social Behaviour –

The idea is to look back and reflect on how successful the work in tackling Anti

Social Behaviour has been and to scrutinise the plans for 2025. It was requested that we ask for a representative from Neighbourhood Policing team to attend. It was noted that Neat Streets had been to Green Sub-Committee so that a briefing note on this work to update members of this committee. It was therefore suggested that the Community Safety Partnership Plan and targets be brought and an update on whether we are achieving the targets. It was also suggested that the sub-committee on informed of preparedness for Christmas festivities in relation to Crime and Disorder and Anti Social Behaviour.

It was agreed that Homelessness and the Housing Inspection and Satisfaction Survey would slot into the February meeting and that the Equally Well Strategy update would come to April meeting.

**S14/24          Date and time of next meeting**

6.00pm on Tuesday 3 December 2024.