

Housing Sub Committee

Monday, 23 January 2023

Present: Councillor A Newman (Chair)
Councillors John Hunter, A Percy, M Thirlaway, J Walker,
E Parker-Leonard, L Ferasin and L Bones

Apologies: Councillors M Fox, G Madden, R O'Keefe and O Scargill

In attendance: Councillors D Drummond, L Marshall and J Harrison

HO21/22 Appointment of Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's Constitution the following substitution was made:

Councillor L Bones for Councillor O Scargill

HO22/22 Declarations of Interest

Councillor M Thirlaway declared a non-registerable personal interest in Item 5, Decarbonisation Works for Housing, as his father works for North Tyneside Council.

HO23/22 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

HO24/22 Decarbonisation Works for Housing

The sub-committee received a presentation in relation to Decarbonisation Works for Housing. The presentation covered works complete and current position; decarbonisation plans for Council housing stock, decarbonisation plans for the private sector; the authority's approach to Housing net-zero; ongoing work and opportunities. As the topic covered the remits of Housing Sub-committee and Environment Sub-committee, members of Environment Sub-committee were invited to attend the meeting.

The sub-committee was informed there are around 97,000 homes in the borough, 14,281 of which are part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This equated to 14% of all housing. It was noted that the authority has more influence over its own stock through investment decisions but there was a finite amount of money that restricted the ability to deliver ambitions.

Of the Council's housing stock of 14,281 homes, 13,357 are general needs, 924 North Tyneside Living PFI homes and 332 communal areas. A HRA New Build Programme, 30-year HRA Business Management Plan focussed on Decent Homes and the Housing Asset Management Strategy set out investment plans for the Authorities stock.

Within the private sector, responsibility for improvement and repairs rests with the owner. Grant funding was relied on to support efficiency improvements in the private sector. Investment to homes was delivered through a range of grants, including the installation of cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and some boiler replacements. The private sector stock had an average SAP rating of 64 (Low Band D). Under the Green Homes Grant LAD Schemes 1 and 2, a total of 606 measures were installed in 502 low-income homes, taking 386 homes up to EPC C.

A variety of measures had been implemented in Council owned homes to improve energy efficiency including: cavity wall and loft insulation; external insulation works complete on all non-traditional homes; double glazing in all homes; high efficiency lighting in communal areas; the installation of high efficiency condensing boilers; and Solar PV arrays to over 1,690 homes. The investment decisions that had been made put the Authority's housing stock in a good position, with a SAP rating of 72.88 (EPC Band C). SAP rating nationally was 66 (EPC Band D).

In terms of getting to Net-Zero, the Committee was informed that there were no real low-cost affordable solutions and there was an importance in identifying the right technologies to avoid investment regret. Options being looked at included a fabric first approach to building; Solar PV; Battery Storage; air source heat pumps; and information, education and behaviour change.

Members were informed that to bring Council owned homes up to a maximum efficiency rating would cost an estimated £500m and to bring private sector homes to maximum efficiency would be £2.7bn.

The HRA Business Plan identified decarbonisation works to be undertaken, with 15,012 measures amounting to £46.35m through to 2030. This included 1,538 Solar PV arrays to be installed, 5,640 high efficiency condensing boilers and 4,720 homes having LED lighting installed.

In relation to the decarbonisation of the private sector, LAD3 funding was being delivered which consisted of 320 measures by April 2023. Work was ongoing to access grants to support low-income homes. It was noted that the criteria for accessing grant funding was narrow. The North of Tyne Combined Authority was developing a business model for a 'one stop shop' energy advice centre.

The Authority's approach to Housing Net-Zero was a workstream linked to the Carbon Net-Zero Board. Progress was reported monthly on 5 key areas: General Needs Housing, Sheltered Accommodation, Communal Areas, New Build and Private Sector. It was noted that the challenge would always be levels of funding.

In relation to on-going work and opportunities, it was noted that all Council stock new builds from 2023 would be off gas, utilising a range of decarbonisation technologies. This was 2 years ahead of the government target of 2025. It was noted that consideration would need to be given to fuel poverty implications of moving to electricity-based solutions, especially in light of current energy costs.

The sub-committee discussed specifications for and lifespan of solar panel technology. It was noted that solar panels used to have to be in a south facing position, but that

technology had moved on so a south facing position was no longer a requirement. Solar panels were guaranteed for a period of around 20 – 25 years, after this time the efficiency of the panels would decrease. It was noted that as technology progresses, it was expected that panels would run at the greatest level of efficiency for longer.

The issue of air flow in properties was discussed and the problems that condensation can cause as a result of this. The possible use of humidity monitors was discussed and it was noted that this was something that was being considered by officers. The need for information to be made available in relation to small energy saving measures that could be made in the home was highlighted.

In relation to insulation measures on housing stock, it was noted that an asset programme, dating back to the late 1990's, set out when insulation would be due for renewal. In relation to the boiler replacement scheme, officers were asked if there could now be an element of choice, whereby tenants could choose to replace an old boiler with a heat source pump. It was noted that this was something that could be explored but that issues could arise if a future tenant wanted to return to a high efficiency condensing boiler system.

Members thanked officers for the information presented.

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