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SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2024

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Present: Councillors Blackman (Chair), Y Frampton, Kloker, Leggett, McManus, Powell-Vaughan and G Lambert  
Appointed Members: Rob Sanders

Apologies: Councillors Renyard and Stead

31. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

It was noted that following receipt of the temporary resignation of Councillor Every from the Committee, the Monitoring Officer, acting under delegated powers, had appointed Councillor G Lambert to replace them for the purposes of this meeting and in addition noted the apologies of Councillors Renyard and Stead.

32. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**RESOLVED** that:

(i) Councillor Powell-Vaughan be elected as Vice-Chair for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024/25.

33. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the committee meeting held on the 24 October 2024 were approved and signed as a correct record.

34. **HOUSING STRATEGY 2016- 2025 - "NEW AND BETTER HOMES FOR ALL"**

The Committee noted and discussed the report of the Executive Director - Resident Services detailing actions that are being taken to meet the ambitions outlined in Southampton City Council's Housing Strategy - "New and better homes for all".

Councillor Letts, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, Debbie Ward, Executive Director - Resident Services, Jamie Brenchley, Director of Housing, Ian Collins, Director of Environment, Stephen Hayes-Arter, Service Manager for Private Sector Housing and Port Health, Dr Mark Jordan and Professor Helen Carr of the Research Centre on People, Property, Community at the University of Southampton's Law School, and expert advisers to the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel on the Private Rented Sector inquiry, were in attendance and with the consent of the Chair addressed the meeting.

Councillor Letts provided an overview of the Council's aims and objectives relating to housing in Southampton and the Executive Director for Resident Services outlined plans to develop and adopt a new housing strategy in 2025.

The Committee noted the update and discussed the value of the current strategy in addressing the inter-connected housing challenges facing the city today, that the Committee noted as being:

- Housing supply – The supply of new housing has slowed and for many residents' homes in the city are too expensive to buy.
- Private Rented Sector – Often homes to rent in the city are expensive, in poor condition, and result in instability for tenants.
- Southampton City Council's housing stock and management – The housing waiting list is high; too many homes are not of a decent standard; voids currently take too long to bring back into use.
- Homelessness – There are an increasing number of residents at risk of homelessness, and this is increasing the cost to the Council of temporary and emergency accommodation.

The Committee considered the Cabinet response to the Private Rented Sector Scrutiny Inquiry; the proposal for an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme; the proposal for a Private Sector Leasing Scheme and the decision taken at the meeting of Cabinet in October relating to the Council Right to Buy Receipt Proposals.

The Committee raised the following issues with the Cabinet Member and officers in attendance:

- The lack of ambition with regards to improving outcomes in the private rented sector evidenced in the response to the scrutiny inquiry.
- The Inquiry Panel recommendations are noted as being accepted but the commentary against a number of the recommendations contradicts this commitment and identifies that they will not be delivered.
- The Council's commitment to delivering affordable homes in the city.
- The requirement to undertake a stock conditions survey to evidence the need for future initiatives to improve conditions in the private rented sector.
- The capacity to enforce standards in the private rented sector.
- The University of Southampton and Southampton Tenants Union willingness to contribute to the development of a database of market rent levels in Southampton.
- How discounts for the proposed Additional HMO Licensing scheme could be linked to meeting higher standards in the quality of accommodation provided.
- The limited, but welcome impact the plans to purchase and lease properties in the private sector to accommodate people at risk of homelessness will have on the scale of the problem experienced in Southampton.

**RESOLVED** that,

- i) Reflecting the limited value being garnered by the current version, the next iteration of the Council's Housing Strategy is developed and published as soon as resources allow.
- ii) Cabinet reviews the Council's ambition, objectives and approach to the private rented sector, and draws on good practice elsewhere to fundamentally improve outcomes for tenants in the city.

- iii) In recognition of its importance with regards to targeting future activity, Cabinet explores all available opportunities to fund and procure a stock condition survey as soon as possible.
- iv) Cabinet commits to the target of delivering 8,000 additional affordable homes in Southampton by 2040 as outlined by the Council following the approval of the first Affordable Housing Framework sites in December 2022.
- v) The Executive contact the University of Southampton and Southampton Tenants Union to explore their willingness to be involved in developing and updating a database of market rent levels for Southampton.
- vi) Whilst recognising that there is a formal process to follow to adopt a new Additional HMO licensing scheme, if this scheme is approved the Council reviews the fee structure, including discounts available, to support the improvement of housing conditions and the management of HMOs in Southampton.

35. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered and discussed the responses from the Executive to recommendations from previous meetings.