

To: City Executive Board

Date: 17 December 2014

Report of: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Title of Report: Asset Management Strategy – Council Housing Stock

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Housing Panel on the Asset Management Strategy – Council Housing Stock.

Key decision Yes

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Sam Hollick

Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons, Executive Member for Housing and Estate Regeneration

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018; Meeting Housing Needs

Recommendations:

- 1. That the City Council reviews whether it is doing all it reasonably can to ensure that tenants leave their homes in good condition before vacating them.**
- 2. That the City Council strengthens partnership working to ensure that the advice and materials provided to tenants by the City Council and other agencies is joined up and consistent.**
- 3. That the City Council reviews whether mould is a recurring issue in the stock condition survey, and ensures that where mould occurs, it is treated effectively.**
- 4. That the City Council ensures that information about the National Home Swap scheme is made available to tenants who are under-occupying, in addition to other options.**

Introduction

- 1. The Housing Panel considered the Asset Management Strategy – Council Housing Stock at its public meeting on 10 December 2014. The**

Committee would like to thank Martin Shaw and Allison Dalton for assisting this wide-ranging discussion.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Housing Panel support the Strategy and the direction of travel it provides.
3. The Panel reviewed what the strategy says about void property repairs and felt that the wording on page 13 could be stronger than 'encourage tenants to leave their home in a good state of repair'. Members sought assurances that the City Council does all it can within the resources available to ensure that houses are in good condition when left vacant. The Panel recognises that the City Council would not want to hold deposits, and that recharges can be difficult to recover after the event, so the focus should be on working with tenants prior to properties becoming vacant.

Recommendation 1 - That the City Council reviews whether it is doing all it reasonably can to ensure that tenants leave their homes in good condition before vacating them.

4. The panel discussed heating and ventilation and noted that where new heating systems are installed, it is vital that residents are shown how to use them correctly. It was also noted that agencies such as Age UK advise older residents to keep their windows closed. The Panel sought assurances that the City Council works closely with such partners to ensure consistency of such communications.

Recommendation 2 - That the City Council strengthens partnership working to ensure that the advice and materials provided to tenants by the City Council and other agencies is joined up and consistent.

5. Members questioned how widespread the problem of mould is across the Council's housing stock. Members commented that it has been known for mould to be painted over and sought assurances that this was not common practice.

Recommendation 3 - That the City Council reviews whether mould is a recurring issue in the stock condition survey, and ensures that where mould occurs, it is treated effectively.

6. The Panel recognise the need to make better use of the Council's existing housing stock and questioned whether information about the National Home Swap scheme is made available to tenants who are under-occupying.

Recommendation 4 – That the City Council ensures that information about the National Home Swap scheme is made available to tenants who are under-occupying, in addition to other options.

7. Officers agreed to look into issues with night light systems that have installed in communal areas.

Further consideration

8. The Housing Panel will monitor delivery against the aims set out in the strategy. The panel will also consider the Council's Energy Strategy, Private Sector Housing Policy and its approach to under-occupancy in due course.

Director and Board Member Comments

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List of background papers: None

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