

REFERRAL FROM COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE – 5 SEPTEMBER 2024

The Committee had before it a Notice of Motion from Councillor Graham, referred from Council on 3 July 2024, in the following terms:-

Council notes the unprecedented housing and homelessness issues affecting tenants and potential tenants in Aberdeen;

Recognises the extreme pressures facing housing and homelessness services in Aberdeen today;

These pressures exist despite the best endeavours and professionalism of officers within the Council that have seen a number of positive achievements. These include:

The Aberdeen Labour decisions alongside our coalition partners 2017-2022 to build 2,000 new Council homes on top of procuring over 4,000 Affordable homes with Registered Social Landlords.

This has resulted in

- Dyce new Builds Completed
- Auchmill Road New builds Completed.
- Summerhill New Build has now achieved Practical Completion for all blocks
- Tillydrone New Build has now achieved Practical Completion for all blocks
- Cloverhill New Build is progressing as planned
- Kaimhill New Build is nearing completion,
- Greenferns and Greenferns Landward are progressing to achieve RIBA 3 completion
- Craighill New Build is out to tender
- Kincorth New Build tender documentation is being finalised; and
- 206 Union Street works have commenced

However, the number of households assessed as homeless or in housing need waiting for a home to call their own remains of significant concern.

As detailed in the reports to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee:

- Homeless applications are at a 13 year high at the end of March 2024, with levels recorded (1,481) not seen since the same period in 2010/11
- 442 Statutory Homeless Households Residing in Temporary Accommodation at end March 2024.
- Only 30 % of Unintentional homeless decisions reached within 21 Days
- 161 days the Average length of journey in days for applicants assessed as unintentionally homeless at the end of March.
- The Council are now breaching our duties in accordance with the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, by having households in unsuitable accommodation for longer than 7 days.
- 237.7 The YTD Average time taken to re-let all properties (Citywide - days) against a target of 125 days at the end of March 2024.

- The YTD Void Rent Loss figure for 2023/24 is £7,805,806 this equates to 7.91% of the gross debit (rent due) which is a significant increase when compared with the same period last year where the figure stood at £5,271,632 (5.70%).
- Planned maintenance projects such as in Summerhill have been put on hold.
- In April 2022, 4,750 applications were on the waiting list for housing, this has grown to 6,658 in May 2024

These issues have been exasperated by the following.

- 366 houses identified as uninhabitable due to RAAC and a massive transfer operation in place for Council tenants;
- Of the 366 houses, 138 were privately owned properties whose owners have been virtually neglected by ACC, the Scottish Administration and the UK Government, families face ruin and bankruptcy and this should not be allowed to happen in a Civil Society;
- The Housing Revenue account was funding the majority of the costs currently being incurred and faced unprecedented financial pressures. .

This a perilous situation and one that required action today.

That the Committee therefore agrees to:-

- Declare a Housing Emergency in Aberdeen today;
- Instruct the Executive Director – Families and Communities, working with key partners internally and externally, to bring forward a Housing Emergency Action Plan in two cycles. This plan will address how we will tackle homelessness and increase housing supply in the short and medium term, increase maintenance programmes on our housing stock and support the findings of the RAAC report due in August;
- Instruct the Chief Executive to write to both Scottish and UK Governments advising them of this grave situation and requesting immediate support.
- Request that the Scottish Government urgently review the decision to cut the Affordable Housing Supply Programme allocation to Aberdeen by 24% (£3.904m) for 2024/25.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to acknowledge that in May 2024 the Scottish Government declared that Scotland had a national housing emergency;
- (ii) to recognise the seriousness of the housing situation facing the city, which was causing far too many families to experience housing insecurity and homelessness;
- (iii) to acknowledge the significant challenges being posed by the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) emergency in the city and the additional pressure this has placed upon housing supply in Aberdeen;
- (iv) to note that a roundtable meeting with both the Scottish and UK Governments has been requested to discuss the financial impact of RAAC on the Council and seek any additional funding to help meet the short-term rehoming costs and the longer-term rebuild phases;
- (v) to note the ongoing work being carried out by officers, Registered Social Landlords and other sector partners within the city to deliver the homes and

services which people rely on, through our existing Local Housing Strategy, Strategic Housing Investment Plan, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, empty homes work, and work as part of the Homewards Programme;

- (vi) to recognise the impact that the housing crisis was having on communities across Aberdeen, due to the shortage of affordable homes, changing housing need and demand, and decades of under investment in our housing stock;
- (vii) to note that, as outlined in report F&C/24/176, the Housing Board was established in late March 2024 to identify risks through the Housing Service, oversee improvements and establish an action plan, the first bi-annual report on progress towards this would be presented to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee in November 2024;

Therefore, this Committee:

1. Agrees we are in a Housing Emergency;
2. Commits to the creation and implementation of a Housing Emergency Action Plan, through the work of the Housing Board, which will be refreshed and reported bi-annually to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee – this Action Plan will draw together ongoing work, existing strategies and council teams, aligning these behind the shared goal of tackling the housing emergency;
3. **Recommends to Council to establish a cross-party working group to monitor the progress of the Housing Emergency Action Plan, to be chaired by the Convener of the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee;**
4. Will take a human rights-based approach to delivering the Action Plan, embedding participation, accountability, non-discrimination and empowerment into the process; and
5. Commits to working with communities, individuals with lived experience of the housing emergency, and internal and external partners to deliver the Action Plan and develop solutions to the housing emergency.