

**FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**Report of the Director Finance, Governance and Contracts  
Part A**

FPSC WORK PROGRAMME

Purpose of Report

To review and plan the scrutiny work the Committee will undertake going forward.

Recommendation

To review and agree the Committee's scrutiny work programme

Reason

To enable the Council's scrutiny arrangements to operate efficiently and effectively.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2024 commits the Council to continue to improve customer service and deliver outstanding services.

This Committee can identify and schedule items for its own scrutiny work programme without needing the approval of the Scrutiny Commission if those items fall within its area of responsibility. If the Committee identifies a topic for scrutiny that is outside its area of responsibility, it can make a recommendation to the Scrutiny Commission that it is added to its scrutiny work programme or that a scrutiny panel be established.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions

Any decisions made during the meeting will be implemented as appropriate.

Report Implications

***Financial Implications***

None.

***Risk Management***

None identified.

***Equality and Diversity***

None identified.

**Climate Change and Carbon Impact**

None identified.

***Crime and Disorder***

None identified.

**Wards Affected**

Not applicable.

**Publicity Arrangements**

Not applicable.

***Consultations***

Not applicable.

**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Caring for the Environment	Yes (if relevant items scrutinised)
Healthy Communities	Yes (if relevant items scrutinised)
A Thriving Economy	Yes (if relevant items scrutinised)
Your Council	Yes (if relevant items scrutinised)

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

Scrutiny Work Programme

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## Part B

### Changes since last meeting

To note the addition of Council Assets Update (to meeting on 12th Sep) and Resources Update (to meeting on 28th Nov) as requested by the Committee at its meeting on 27th June 2023.

At the request of the Head of Planning and Growth and agreed with the Chair, an 'S106 Agreement Monitoring' report has been added to the Committee's work programme for consideration at its meeting to be held on 28th November 2023.

### Scrutiny Commission response - KI11 (A) and (B)

At its meeting on 7th August 2023 the Scrutiny Commission considered a report submitted by the Director of Housing and Wellbeing providing an update on Void properties. The report can be accessed here:

<https://charnwood.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s12049/Update%20on%20Void%20Properties.pdf>

At the request of the Chair the Committee is asked to note the Scrutiny Commission's response below (minute 20, 223/24 refers).

*A report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing to provide an update on the position in respect of voids (empty properties) at Council accommodation, the recent actions taken, in progress, and planned to reduce both the number of voids and the length of time properties stand empty, was submitted (a supplement report filed with these minutes).*

*The Director of Housing and Wellbeing and the Democratic Services Officer (NC) assisted with the consideration of this item.*

- i. The Council had an internal voids repairs team that worked on standard voids. The team did not have the resources to complete the backlog of voids work. Post meeting note: It was confirmed by the Director of Housing and Wellbeing that the Council had recruited three additional Joiners and one additional Plasterer to assist with voids work.*
- ii. It was highlighted that there were numerous teams involved in the management process of properties (different teams were involved to identify the work, undertake the work, receive housing applications, and allocate properties) and the council had recently participated in a workshop to map out and simplify the process, with the aim of making it quicker. The Scrutiny Commission asked to be informed about the outcome of the workshop and how well the new procedures were working when they had been adopted.*
- iii. There had been a review of the Housing Needs Service which had resulted in an increase in Allocations Officers, from 0.6 (full time equivalent) to 4 (full time equivalent) in order to increase the number of properties being let.*
- iv. The Council intended to consult with tenants on potentially declassifying some age restricted properties. Almost 20% of the Council's housing stock was restricted to applicants aged 45. Members were concerned that declassifying properties may result in lifestyle clashes with residents. The Council would look into some mitigation measures to try to prevent issues, such as increasing*

*AntiSocial Behaviour resources and a phased implementation of declassification. Some of the Council's housing stock was age restricted to over-60s and it was highlighted that it would be beneficial if these residents were given the option to move into a different property, should they be affected by the declassification of surrounding properties.*

- v. Members requested an updated version of the table in the Appendix to the report submitted to the Scrutiny Commission on 12th December 2022, including information on the properties that had now been let, and the properties that had not been let. It was agreed that this information should also be circulated to members of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee.*
- vi. The Council had difficulty in recruiting into roles associated with voids repairs because similar roles in the private sector offered more attractive salaries. It was highlighted that it would be possible to recruit Apprentices into the Council to support the work of the Voids Repairs team.*
- vii. Members felt that it would be beneficial to receive a regular update on the progress made in terms of the completion of work on voids and letting the properties. The Director of Housing and Wellbeing stated that this would be possible. It was highlighted that members of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee would also benefit from receiving this information.*
- viii. It was thought that the sale of Council properties on the open market would enable the Council to retain the full amount of the sale price. The funds allocated through this process would be required to be spent on further rental properties.*
- ix. A further update report in six months was requested by the Scrutiny Commission.*

*Councillor Mark Charles attended the meeting as an observer, and with the Chair's permission, asked whether it would be possible to use money from the Capital Budget to employ additional staff to complete the required work on voids. The Director of Housing and Wellbeing stated that this had already been done, but emphasized that it was difficult to recruit into trade positions as salaries were competitive in the private sector.*

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the Scrutiny Commission considered the update and identified any further actions to be taken.*
- 2. That the Director of Housing and Wellbeing provide information about the outcome of the void properties workshop, including the changes made and how well the new procedures were working.*
- 3. That the Director of Housing and Wellbeing provide an updated version of the table in the Appendix to the report submitted to the Scrutiny Commission on 12th December 2022, including information on the properties that had now been let, and the properties that had not been let, following the meeting. This information should also be shared with the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee.*
- 4. That the Director of Housing and Wellbeing provide a regular update to Councillors on the Scrutiny Commission and the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee, on the progress made in terms of the completion of work on voids and letting the properties.*
- 5. That a further update on voids properties be submitted to the Scrutiny Commission in six months (February 2024).*