

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness held on Thursday, 28 July 2022 at 10.00 am at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Darren Sanders (in the Chair)

Councillors Cal Corkery
George Madgwick
Daniel Wemyss

Apologies for Absence

15. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

16. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17. Environment Bill and landlord preparation

David Emmett, Head of Waste Services introduced the information only report and updated the meeting on:

- The upcoming waste changes as a result of the Environment Act 2021
- The administration's ambitions to increase recycling rates to support the city in meeting its net zero carbon commitments by 2030.
- How PCC, as a social housing landlord, is preparing for these changes.

David provided a brief background on the Environment Act which will introduce compulsory separation of more recycling streams and increase the recyclable materials that need to be collected at kerbside. In July 2021, the Cabinet noted the act and agreed the principle of providing a twin stream recycling collection service in the future. A new materials recovery site is being developed to enable this.

David provided the background on the Waste Provision Act for PCC housing blocks. As a landlord the Council is responsible for ensuring tenants have the correct information and suitable waste storage facilities to manage their waste in the right way.

Waste Management and Housing Building Services had set up a joint project to consider PCC housing blocks and their needs now and into the future.

With the increased need to collect waste streams separately there was a need to ensure these changes could be accommodated at all the housing blocks.

There are four main aims:

1. To provide the correct bin provision and capacity for weekly refuse collections.
2. To provide efficient recycling and capacity for weekly recycling collections.
3. To understand and remove barriers to recycling whilst empowering and educating residents to recycle more fully and correctly.
4. To reduce anti-social behaviour associated with and around bin stores.

Five housing blocks have been selected and each block will have the following collections: refuse, food waste, dried mixed recycling, and fibre (paper and card). In addition, each block will have a glass bin and small electrical item bin.

Minor improvement works are to be carried out to ensure the additional bins can be accommodated safely with improvements to lighting, paintwork, and flooring along with new signage and stickers to clearly explain what waste can be placed in each bin.

Some work had already been undertaken:

- The team had been out to the resident consortium and received mainly positive feedback with residents understanding why the changes were taking place and recognising the challenges.
- Door knocking had taken place at the trial blocks. Residents were pleased to be getting separate food waste collections.

Of note is that although residents will be asked to separate recycling into two streams, they will be collected in the back of the same refuse collection vehicle until the twin stream collections service is fully implemented in the city. This is likely to be in 2025 when the new materials recovery facility is built.

Questions from Residents' Consortium

The glass recycling service was considered helpful along with the small electrical items recycling. There was some concern about how some residents will manage taking their different waste streams down the stairs.

David advised there are discussions ongoing with estate services about how changes might be implemented to assist those residents with a need or mobility issues. The trial will consider barriers to recycling, attempt to understand them, and then consider changes to be implemented.

Maria requested a representative to attend a residents' consortium meeting halfway through the trial to update residents on the progress.

Members' questions

In response to members' questions and comments the following points were clarified:

- There will be 6 bins in total. One for general waste, two for recycling (one for dry mixed recycling and one for fibre), one for glass and one for small recycling items. Eventually glass will be able to be go in the dry mixed recycling bin.
- Residents are being asked to separate their dry mixed recycling and fibre waste ahead of the full twin stream collection implementation in order to trial it and consider the barriers that would prevent this recycling taking place. Volumes of the different streams of waste will be monitored. The plan is to pre-empt legislative changes, test communications, test implementation and see how residents take it up.
- The blocks for the trial were chosen from different areas where the estate teams can engage with residents on the changes, with different layouts for bin stores, and multi-storey blocks. The choice was purely officer led with no political involvement.
- It is understood that kitchen size is an issue for residents. They will be supplied with reusable flat bags that fold up neatly for recycling. A food waste caddy will be supplied which may take up space on the kitchen side so this will be considered in the trial. There will also be a glass bag.
- With regard to the location of the bins outside Millgate House, planters or screens are being considered to go in front of the bins so they are not so obvious.
- Information packs will be available throughout the trial and will be issued when the bins are swapped over. Notices will be put up in community spaces and on notice boards.
- Feedback will come from the ongoing engagement with residents throughout the trial. The wider Portsmouth residents will also be surveyed on barriers to recycling and general waste provision and bin storage.

Results will be feedback to residents.

- The consultation response from DEFRA on the drinking container return scheme has not yet been received. PCC did respond to the consultation.

Summing up, Councillor Sanders noted the shocking recycling rates in the city in 2018 and outlined how the council has been working on ways to respond to the climate change emergency in a constructive way. He noted that encouraging recycling in council blocks is hugely beneficial and gave an example of Lambeth council where recycling rates increased massively. He noted the need to carry out the trial in as many blocks as possible to drive up the recycling rates, particularly with food waste, helping to make the city greener. Councillor Sanders took on board all the comments made, particularly around how to help the many senior citizens with recycling. Councillor Sanders encouraged everyone to provide honest and open feedback to the team and thanked them for taking the time to present the report.

The Cabinet Member noted the report.

18. PCC Social Housing Landlord Services in Havant

Mark Fitch - Head of Local Housing Authority, introduced the information only report and updated the meeting on:

- The work of Portsmouth City Council's Housing Service as a Social Housing Landlord in Havant.
- The material that will form part of a dedicated information page on the PCC website, which provides an overview of the landlord services for the housing stock in Havant and highlights the work undertaken for the benefit of PCC tenants, leaseholders and the wider community
- The publication of the webpage on 21 July 2022.
- The Portsmouth City Council (PCC) and Havant Borough Council (HBC) officer liaison meetings that take place to focus on all aspects of the housing service operating in Havant.

One third of PCC housing stock is in Havant. Following a meeting between PCC and HBC it became apparent that the promotion of PCC services for residents of Havant and other people needed to be added to the website. An information pack has been produced which is now live on the PCC website.

Questions from Residents' Consortium

In response to questions and comments the following points were clarified:

- Residents do not currently attend meetings with HBC and PCC as the meeting is an officer's meeting. However, if that would be beneficial to residents then setting up such a meeting could be explored.

Members' questions

In response to members' questions and comments the following points were clarified:

- Portsmouth has 100% nomination/allocation rights on their existing stock in the borough of Havant. In regard to new developments, there will be new nomination agreement for each site, that is negotiated with HBC, dependant on the number of new homes being developed. Small developments of 5 homes or less will be nominated to by PCC. Larger developments will have an element of homes that will be nominated to by HBC, either first let only or in perpetuity.
- Anyone nominated for a PCC property in Havant has to be on the central Portsmouth housing register - they do not need to have local connections in Havant but will need to meet the requirements of PCC's Allocations Policy, to be accepted onto the Housing register.
- There are 2 Housing Registers, PCC's central register and Hampshire Home Choice. The PCC housing register covers the PCC owned stock in the HBC area. Hampshire Home Choice covers all social housing stock across Hampshire. People can be registered on both housing registers, but these are not in competitions with each other, or for the same properties. People may meet the eligibility criteria to join both registers.

Summing up, Councillor Sanders observed how useful it is to highlight the PCC work that happens in another authority. He was impressed that the webpage has already been published as this shows the benefit of meetings being public. Councillor Sanders understood the confusion concerning the two housing lists and clarified his understanding that one is for Havant tenants and covers the whole of Hampshire, whereas the other list is focused on PCC tenants. It is important that PCC duties to residents in Havant are not overlooked.

The Cabinet Member noted the report.

19. Buy back and development of Council homes

Jo Bennett, Assistant Director Housing Supply and Need, introduced the information only report and updated the meeting on:

- The year-to-date progress of the Council's buy backs and the current housing service development pipeline.

PCC continues to actively purchase property from those previously sold through Right to Buy. Statistics are monitored monthly.

Appendix A provides a detailed breakdown of the properties that have been purchased to date and provides year to date information by property archetype.

PCC have now purchased 370 properties and continue to develop new council housing. The pipeline of developments is in addition to the work carried out by the Regeneration Directorate across the city and in addition to the Ravelin Housing work.

Appendix B details the development sites which have been approved or gone through the democratic process. These are likely to return 657 units. There is an overall pipeline of 750 units as some have not yet gone through the democratic decision process.

A number of different types of accommodation are being developed along with the Patey Court development in Paulsgrove, being supported housing for adults.

Questions from Residents' Consortium

In response to questions and comments the following points were clarified:

- In theory any leasehold property is available to buyback. Leaseholders are reminded every time the accounting for service charge is issued to consider PCC first if they are going to sell their property. No slowing down in offers had happened and PCC was currently buying back just over 100 properties a year. There was a potential pool of about 2000 properties.

Members' questions

In response to members' questions and comments the following points were clarified:

- In order to ensure value for money on buybacks, an external valuer is used who provides a window of negotiation. The Acquisition officer works with the vendor to understand what they are looking for. Average prices are surprisingly low, and vendors tend to appreciate not having to engage estate agents and pay those fees. Vendors also appreciate the lack of stress and hassle working with PCC and the assured transaction.
- The buyback process and any associated housing need for the vendor are dealt with as separate transactions. Vendors' situations are considered on a case-by-case basis and where needed some vendors had remained in the property as a PCC tenant although this was very rare.
- Under 'Right to Buy' legislation, a leaseholder can exercise their right to buy at a discount, live in the property and can sell whenever they want subject to a tapering repayment of discount. After 5 years, they are free to sell with no repayment of the discount.
- In legislation, PCC have the right not to lose money spent on a development or on purchasing an asset, which is in place for 15 years. There is a tapering of discount available on situations where PCC has bought back a property and the tenant then applies to buy it back under 'right to buy'.
- Venture Tower was considered by the directorate as an investment. Careful consideration was given to the archetype of homes which were needed, and it was considered Venture Tower was an opportunity better suited to the private sector.
- The consultation was continuing on Horatio and Leamington with a planning application due to come in the Autumn. The blocks were sorted, and the interiors and community spaces were now being considered.
- The current rate of 'Right to Buy' sales completed in each year for the last 5 years is:

2018-19	58
2019-20	82
2020-21	28
2021-22	75
2022-23	13 (completed so far, this financial year in Qtr 1)

- PCC only issue secure tenancies. All developments proposed are currently at affordable housing levels. For every development, the 3 rent levels are considered. The social rent option is discussed with Homes England to see if they would bridge the gap in terms of a grant to allow development at a social rent. PCC are building high specification homes to ensure residents have as low an energy bill as possible. These often do not meet the affordability criteria for social rent.
- In relation to the purchase of Viking Court and Shootpool and the residents of those properties, Jo advised that the exchange of contracts is imminent, and she stressed that it is PCC intention to purchase the properties. It is not appropriate for PCC to contact tenants until the exchange has

happened. At that time, there will be quality engagement with residents so they understand their rehousing situations and how they will be impacted.

- In relation to housing association properties, PCC officers work closely with RP partners to ensure that tenants receive appropriate services. Any RSL properties that are up for sale will go through an open tender and bid. Occasionally, the RP of any poorly managed properties are challenged, and PCC have on occasion picked up these properties.

Summing up, Councillor Sanders thanked officers for the report to highlight the lack of affordable homes for Portsmouth residents. Money was previously set aside to buy council properties back whilst the new build development programme was established. There had also been a push to reduce the time that properties remain empty between lets (the void period) which had now been reduced by 25% with the Voids & Allocations Intervention. There was an issue in terms of reconciling the creation of passive homes with providing social rents and PCC need to be open and honest about the trade-offs going forward. Councillor Sanders noted the level of community engagement and general approach with Horatio and Leamington houses which he considered revolutionary.

Moving forward, PCC was keen to buy back 500 council homes by March 2024 and was currently on course to achieve that target whilst also looking for value for money. £100 million over 5 years was being invested in the programme.

The Cabinet Member noted the report.

The meeting concluded at 11.27 am.

Councillor Darren Sanders
Chair