



NOTICE OF MEETING

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2023 AT 9.30 AM

COUNCIL CHAMBER - THE GUILDHALL, PORTSMOUTH

Telephone enquiries to Allison Harper, Local Democracy Officer, 023 9268 8014
Email: democratic@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

Membership

Councillor Darren Sanders (Cabinet Member)

Councillor Cal Corkery
Councillor Raymond Dent

Councillor Charlotte Gerada
Councillor Daniel Wemyss

(NB This agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting).

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AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Declarations of Members' Interests**
- 3 Public Artwork - PCC Housing Blocks and Estates (Pages 5 - 22)**

Purpose

To seek approval to the principle to incorporate public art (murals / sculptures etc.) on Portsmouth City Council housing buildings, housing owned assets and within our housing estates across Portsmouth and Havant, and to agree the core principles and the process that will be followed in identifying and approving locations for the installation of public art as and when requests arise.

To seek approval to explore the opportunity to work with Articulate Sage to incorporate into the planned Portsmouth Art Festival 2023 housing buildings and housing owned assets, and in doing so pilot the application of the core principles and process as set out in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness approves the principle to incorporate public art (murals / sculptures etc.) on Portsmouth City Council housing buildings, housing owned assets and within our housing estates across Portsmouth and Havant, and agrees the process that will be followed in identifying and approving locations for the installation of public art as and when requests arise.**
 - 2. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness approves the exploration of a Portsmouth Art Festival 2023 using Housing buildings and housing owned assets to pilot the application of the core principles and process as set out in this report.**
 - 3. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness delegates to the Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Building Services and relevant officers, as appropriate, the application of the core principles and process.**
 - 4. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness requests officers to bring an information report following the Portsmouth Art Festival 2023.**
- 4 Management of energy provision in local authority housing whilst void (Pages 23 - 36)**

Purpose

Purpose of the report is to recommend an improved system of managing gas and electricity supplies in local authority social housing dwellings when the property is void. This report will highlight the benefits a new system would offer tenants and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness notes the positive impact of the pilot with Utilita which includes benefits to tenants and a more efficient process for officers and contractors.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness agrees to a large scale pilot encompassing all of the housing stock for a maximum period of 2 years and request a report to be brought back evaluating the impact of the pilot with a view to making the scheme permanent.
3. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness delegates to the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services to undertake all necessary and procedural actions to formalise the process for void energy management with a single supplier in the long term, undertaking a suitable procurement process if and when required.
4. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness notes that a review of Utilita's tariff rates will be undertaken on a quarterly basis, in line with the Energy Price Cap updates, to ensure that their rates meet or beat other available rates.

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Public health guidance for staff and the public due to Winter coughs, colds and viruses, including Covid-19

- Following the government announcement 'Living with Covid-19' made on 21 February 2022 and the end of universal free testing from 1 April 2022, attendees are no longer required to undertake any asymptomatic/ lateral flow test within 48 hours of the meeting; however, we still encourage attendees to follow the public health precautions we have followed over the last two years to protect themselves and others including vaccination and taking a lateral flow test should they wish.
- We strongly recommend that attendees should be double vaccinated and have received any boosters they are eligible for.
- If unwell we encourage you not to attend the meeting but to stay at home. Updated government guidance from 1 April 2022 advises people with a respiratory infection, a high temperature and who feel unwell, to stay at home and avoid contact with other people, until they feel well enough to resume normal activities and they no longer have a high temperature. From 1 April 2022, anyone with a positive Covid-19 test result is still being

advised to follow this guidance for five days, which is the period when you are most infectious.

- We encourage those attendees with an underlying health condition to wear a face covering while moving around crowded areas of the Guildhall.
- Although not a legal requirement, attendees are strongly encouraged to keep a social distance and take opportunities to prevent the spread of infection by following the 'hands, face, space' and 'catch it, kill it, bin it' advice that protects us from coughs, colds and winter viruses, including Covid-19.
- Hand sanitiser is provided at the entrance and throughout the Guildhall. All attendees are encouraged to make use of hand sanitiser on entry to the Guildhall.
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Title of meeting:	Cabinet Member for Housing & Tackling Homelessness
Date of meeting:	13 th July 2023
Subject:	Public Artwork - PCC Housing Blocks and Estates
Report by:	James Hill - Director for Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services
Author:	Andrew Malbon - Acting Head of Design Service
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek approval to the principle to incorporate public art (murals / sculptures etc.) on Portsmouth City Council housing buildings, housing owned assets and within our housing estates across Portsmouth and Havant, and to agree the core principles and the process that will be followed in identifying and approving locations for the installation of public art as and when requests arise.
- 1.2 To seek approval to explore the opportunity to work with Articulate Sage to incorporate into the planned Portsmouth Art Festival 2023 housing buildings and housing owned assets, and in doing so pilot the application of the core principles and process as set and in this report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness approves the principle to incorporate public art (murals / sculptures etc.) on Portsmouth City Council housing buildings, housing owned assets and within our housing estates across Portsmouth and Havant, and agrees the process that will be followed in identifying and approving locations for the installation of public art as and when requests arise.
- 2.2 The Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness approves the exploration of a Portsmouth Art Festival 2023 using housing buildings and housing owned assets to pilot the application of the core principles and process as set - out in this report.

2.3 The Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness delegates to the Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Building Services and relevant officers, as appropriate the application of the core principles and process.

2.4 The Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness requests officer to bring an information report following the Portsmouth Art Festival 2023.

3. Background

3.1 The Design Service has a track record of providing innovative and imaginative projects for clients across the City Council, recently this has included involving local artists to contribute to the interior decoration of the developments. Many of our young people have been able to enjoy these pieces through the Council's recent expansion of secondary school places. Appendix 1 shows examples of the artwork that has been incorporated into school sufficiency projects.

3.2 The success & the positive impact of these projects has led to further involvement with the artistic community, most recently the very successful Hilsea Lido paint weekend. This 'Levelling Up Fund' scheme saw 15 local and guest artists paint the temporary hoarding around the Lido. The local community's sense of ownership and pride in the work was backed up by a long reach across PCC's social Media presence and the event being reported nationally. Appendix 2 shows a photo of the artwork installed at Hilsea Lido.

3.3 Following this event Housing Neighbourhood and Building Services have been approached by a number of artists and artist's collectives enquiring about opportunities for further painting or sculpture on building and assets owned by PCC.

3.4 Furthermore, the 'Pompey Pelican' (by Curtis Hylton, Angmering House 2022), installed in conjunction with Portsmouth Creates (We Shine Festival) stands as a model for consultation and engagement with the local residents and an example of what can be achieved using a residential housing block. This initiative provided the opportunity to create and test a process to ensure that the installation was successful, and consideration had been given to all that required input to determine if the location and building were suitable. Portsmouth Creates adopted the Arts Council England's (ACE) good practice in the selection of artists for the 'We Shine Festival' and worked with the Portsmouth Events Safety Advisory Group (PESAG). The initiative also enshrined the core principle that the residents living in the block were at the heart of the decision to use the block and engaged in the choice of the artwork. Appendix 3 shows picture of the Pompey Pelican installation.

3.5 With the success of these schemes and interest in using PCC owned housing blocks, housing assets and housing estate areas to incorporate public artwork a process to enable officers to manage enquiries with reference to an agreed set of core principles and process is necessary.

3.6 The creation of the core principles and process should be considered a temporary measure and would be superseded in the event that a policy and process is developed for Portsmouth City Council alongside a City-wide strategy for Public Art. This is likely to arise from opportunities to incorporate public art into strategically significant schemes like the coastal defence works.

4. Core Principles and Process

4.1 If agreed, the following core principles and process will be used by officers to manage contact for the installation of public art.

4.1.1 Core principles

- Residents (tenants and leaseholders) - The residents in a block and the surrounding area (as appropriate) must be engaged and consulted and will have the final say on any proposal. If a majority do not agree with the installation of the public artwork or the design of the public artwork permission will not be granted. This recognises that the buildings and estate areas in scope are residential homes and communal areas, and the landlord should have regard to the views of their tenants and leaseholders. (This principle will be applied as appropriate to other housing owned assets for example licensees of garages, community centre users etc)
- The wider community should also be engaged and consulted as appropriate and particularly when the public artwork is visible to the wider community. Though primacy will be afforded to the residents living in the block about the installation and design, it will be important in considering providing permission to be assured that the wider community support the public art.
- The financial position for the City Council and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) remain under significant pressure. Any installation both in the initial installation and in the longer term, needs to be budget neutral for the housing revenue account which will instead seek to support through 'in kind' support, utilising, for example, the social value opportunity for HRA contractors and officer time.
- The selection of a building and location is subject to landownership checks and approval by building services to ensure that the location and building (or asset) is suitable for the installation. If the installation proceeds building services will oversee the risk assessment for the work.
- It is important that the organisation or group have the capacity and capability to successfully deliver the public artwork, including the relevant public liability insurance and certainty of the funding required to do so. It is also important that the organisation or group are able to demonstrate that they will follow the ACE good practice in the open and transparent selection of artists.
- The ongoing maintenance (including the decommissioning) of any artwork, its suitability for application to a particular substrate and a clear idea of how the

work will weather over time will be considered when making a recommendation.

4.1.2 Process

4.1.2.1 The following is an indicative process and outlines the key elements of the process from the initial contact through to the checks and coordination of the delivery of the public artwork. This process will be refined as individual projects are completed, noting the potential as outlined in 3.6 for a City-Wide policy and process to emerge.

4.1.2.2 An artist, collective of artists or a local resident's groups approach the City Council seeking permission to install or commission a work of public art on part of a building that is owned or managed by the City Council's housing service. All contacts regarding public artwork will be routed through to the Head of Design Services.

4.1.2.3 The Assistant Director of Buildings/Head of Design Service would then be approached to assist with an assessment of the suitability of the proposal using the following terms of reference:

- HRA land team is engaged to check land ownership and oversee any formal arrangements to grant access to the land etc
- Estate Services and the local area office housing management team will be consulted to ensure that any proposal is in keeping with the local area and any environmental improvement plans.
- Resident engagement team are engaged and potentially used to support liaison with residents/community
- Leasehold services are engaged to consider any leasehold interests in residential blocks
- Building Services will be engaged to assess the buildings/assets and locations. The buildings and sites will be surveyed by the buildings service team for suitability with consideration given to future maintenance of any installation, including the duration for the installation and the decommissioning plan
- Culture and Leisure will be engaged to check the fit of a project with other city-wide initiatives.
- Financial services engaged as appropriate to ensure that the scheme is self-funding and will be budget neutral.
- Housing communication and marketing team are engaged to support and compliment communications and publicity including coordinating cabinet member and ward member input.

4.1.2.4 The artist, collective or group will be directed to engage with the Portsmouth Events Safety Advisory Group (PESAG) and any event or installation must meet the requirements of PESAG.

4.1.2.5 Any project or scheme will require final approval by the director through the Directorate Building Management Board (DBMB).

- 4.1.2.6 The Cabinet member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness will be kept informed through internal briefings and via decision meetings as appropriate.
- 4.1.2.7 In order to facilitate contacts and coordinate the process - the Design Services team will hold and coordinate contact and the process.
- 4.1.2.8 The core principles and process largely in response to requests from artists and artist collectives. They can be adapted and used as appropriate for situations where the service commissions directly public artwork and seeks funding to do so. In those instances, the directorate will work with Culture & Leisure and Portsmouth Creates to agree the tendering of the opportunity.

5. Art Festival Opportunity

- 5.1 Articulate Sage have contacted Design Services to request if it is possible to use housing owned buildings to create a Portsmouth Art Festival.
- 5.2 Articulate Sage have access to Arts Council funding and will secure additional funding. The Articulate Sage team have a wide range of experience and are associated with the Cheltenham Art Festival.
- 5.3 The approach requires pace to develop the opportunity and is seen as a means to test the core principles and process as outlined in the report. In doing so this can be seen as a means to build upon the success of the Pompey Pelican installation and install public art to a selection of other housing blocks throughout the City. The festival is anticipated to take place during the summer 2023 with installations complete at the end of the summer (September 2023).
- 5.4 If the festival is successful it is possible for a festival in 2024 to go further to incorporate a wider range of blocks and expand the festival into the Havant area.
- 5.5 In order to move at the pace required for the 2023 art festival exploratory work has been undertaken to identify a range of housing buildings and housing assets to be considered for the 2023 festival. The exploratory work has been caveated that any work undertaken prior to the decisions contained in this report are subject to this decision report and though housing buildings and housing assets have been identified as prima facie suitable for the festival they remain subject to the application of the core principles and process contained in this report. The range identified it is hoped will enable a successful festival incorporating housing buildings and housing assets bringing public art into PCC housing areas throughout the City and will enable the core principles and process to be tested. Appendix 4 shows the list of blocks (and assets) in scope for the 2023 festival.
- 5.6 Assuming the Portsmouth Art Festival 2023 is successful it is hoped that a future festival will expand the reach to housing buildings and housing assets in Havant and other locations in Portsmouth.

6. Reasons for recommendations

- 6.1 Given the success of the initiatives as highlighted in section 3 and interest in further installation of public art it is necessary to seek approval to continue to explore opportunities and agree core principles and a process to enable officers to manage contacts

To enable more communities, especially those that are seldom heard, to access and experience the positive benefits of public art including positive impacts on mental health, pride in the local area and increasing the sense of ownership to spaces that are under valued.

- 6.2 To build stronger relationships within these communities through working with artists.
- 6.3 To understand the constraints and opportunities available to local artists when seeking to deliver large scale public art on Council owned property. To ensure that all connected parties have the opportunity to input into any projects that might be brought forward.
- 6.4 The Portsmouth Art Festival provides then opportunity to further test the core principles and process. The exploratory work with Articulate Sage confirms that the festival will meet the core principles and the recommendation to move forward recognises the need for pace to hold onto the funding and opportunity.

7. Integrated impact assessment

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and submitted, the results will follow once it has been assessed.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The City Solicitor is satisfied that it is within the City Council's powers to approve the recommendations as set out in this report.

9. Director of Finance's comments

- 9.1 The core principles and process, as described in the report, seek to ensure that the installation, as well as any ongoing maintenance, of any public artwork remains cost neutral for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the City Council. Financial Services will be engaged to confirm that the scheme is self-funding. Officers will seek to support the initiative through 'in kind' support, to avoid any draw upon HRA revenue or capital budgets.

.....
Signed by: **James Hill**
Director for Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Example of Public Artwork incorporated into school sufficiency projects
- Appendix 2 – Picture of the Public Artwork installation at Hilsea Lido
- Appendix 3 – Picture of the Pompey Pelican installation
- Appendix 4 – Portsmouth Art Festival 2023 – housing blocks in scope

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

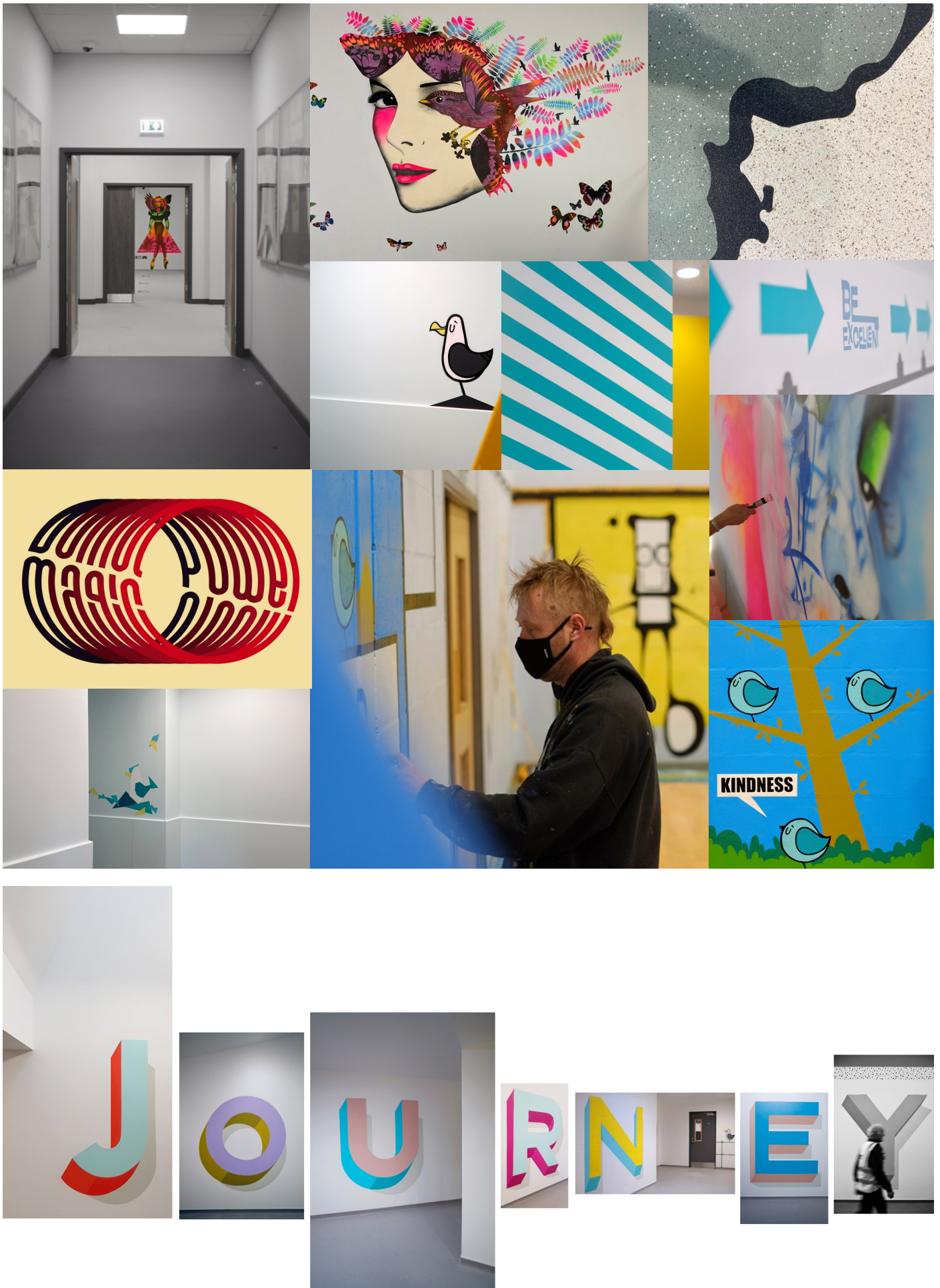
The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Articulate Sage	Articulate Sage (articulate-sage.com)

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

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Paint event organised by PCC to improve the appearance of the temporary hoardings around the north side of the Hilsea Lido, Feb 2023. PCC's own social media posts reached over 137K people & the work was reported in the press locally & nationally. All funding provided by central government's Levelling Up Fund.

Photography PCC in house & Strong Island Media

Cabinet Member for Housing & Tackling Homelessness

Appendix 2: Hilsea Lido Levelling Up Paint mini festival 14th Feb 2023



Installed as part of the We Shine festival in 2022: The Pompey Pelican by Curtis Hylton

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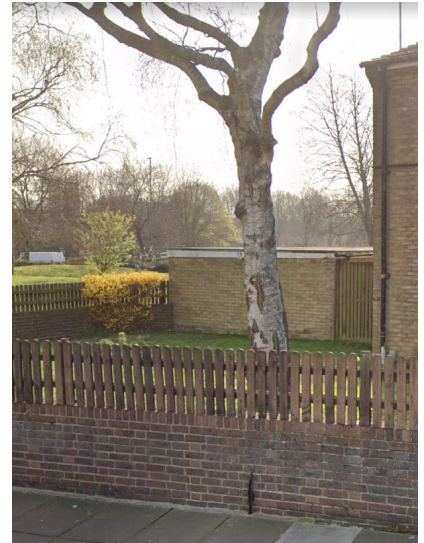
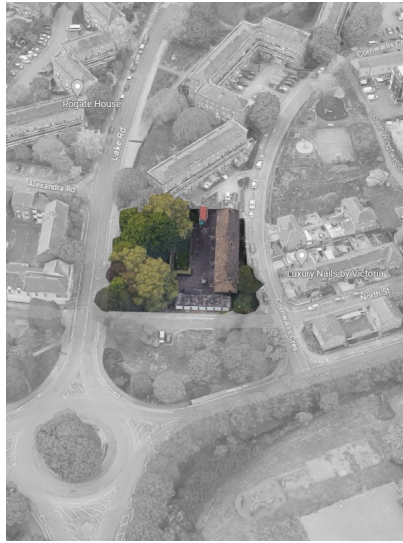
Cabinet Member for Housing & Tackling Homelessness

Appendix 4: Potential sites in scope page 1 of 6

The sites indicated in Appendix 4 show the type of property, location & the element of that property which could receive a mural or other installation. Brief notes next to each site locates the potential. This list is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive & the process outlined in this paper would, if approved give the formal method for gaining permission to deliver a project at these (or other) sites.

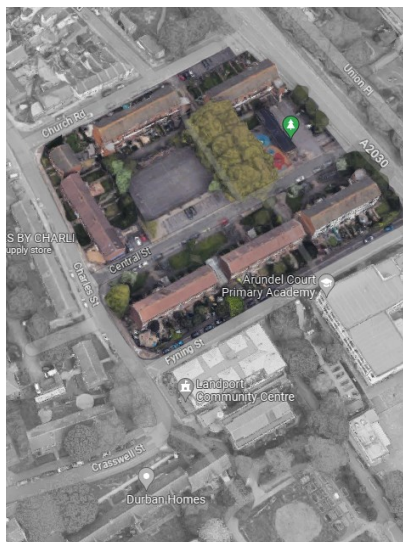
Cornwallis Crescent

Garage gables are in scope



Refuse stores at Chatfield House, Corehampton House & Soberton House.

All the small brick built enclosures are in scope



48 All Saints Road

Boundary wall is in scope



Cabinet Member for Housing & Tackling Homelessness

Appendix 4: Potential sites in scope page 2 of 6

Cheeryble House, Wingfield Street

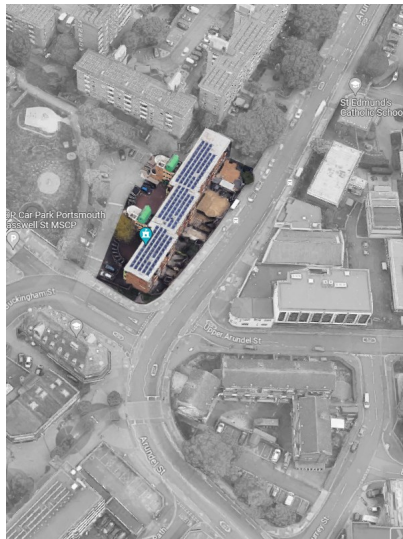
Storage structures are in scope



Canberra House

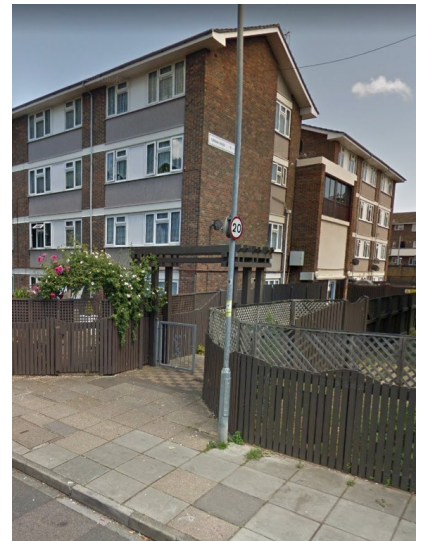
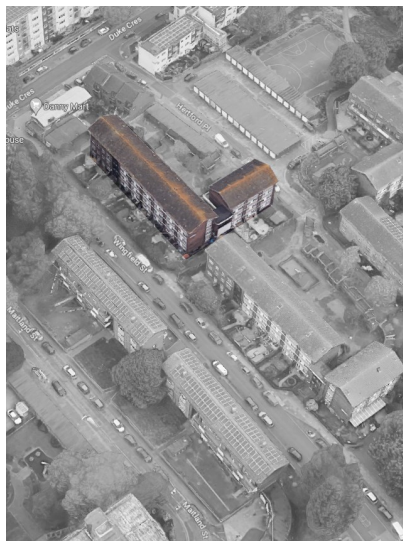
Main structure not in scope

Boundary walls & refuse stores suitable and in scope



Tupman House

Rendered panel illustrated opposite is in scope (stair core), gable walls



Cabinet Member for Housing & Tackling Homelessness

Appendix 4: Potential sites in scope page 3 of 6

Wellington & Waterloo Streets

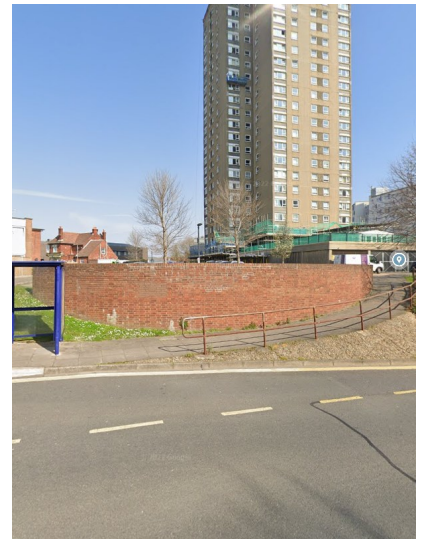
Low refuse structure are in scope.

(Wellington Street shown)



Plymouth Street

South facing boundary wall is in scope & is highly visible.



Cowdray House

Staircore wall is in scope

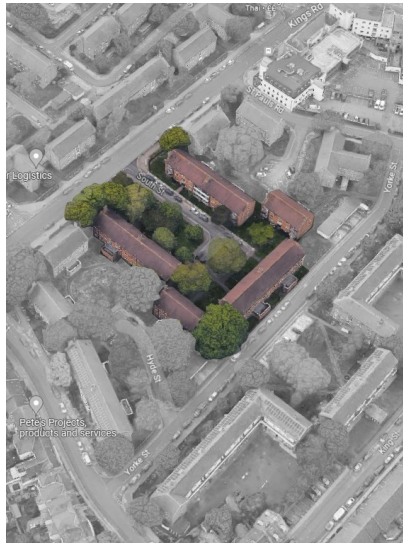


Cabinet Member for Housing & Tackling Homelessness

Appendix 4: Potential sites in scope page 4 of 6

South Street

Gables not suitable, refuse stores to the north of the blocks (facing Yorke Street) are in scope.



Watts Road

Refuse stores and rendered panel illustrated opposite are in scope, gable walls are not.



Idsworth House Garages

Refuse stores and stair core are in scope, gable walls are not.



Cabinet Member for Housing & Tackling Homelessness

Appendix 4: Potential sites in scope page 5 of 6

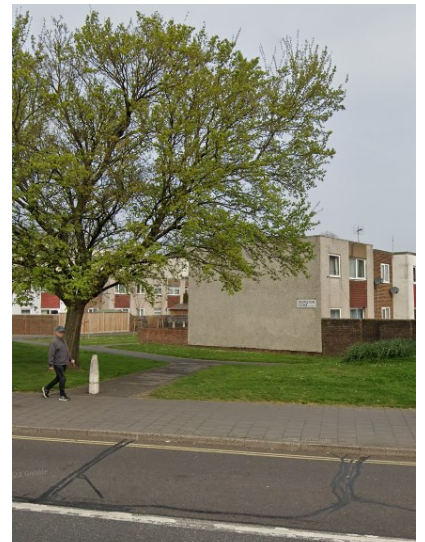
Longs Walk

Gables are suitable & in scope.
(image shows North gable)



Kilmiston Close

Gable walls and stair cores are in scope.



Mayo Close gable wall

Further investigation required but potentially significant elements of this block are in scope



Cabinet Member for Housing & Tackling Homelessness

Appendix 4: Potential sites in scope page 6 of 6

Central Street & Playcourt

Refuse store structures and low walls around playcourt are in scope.



3 Turner Road

Gable wall and boundary wall are in scope.



Agenda Item 4



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness

Date of meeting: 13th July 2023

Subject: Management of energy provision in local authority housing whilst void

Report by: James Hill - Director Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings

Author: Mark Fitch - Head of Local Authority Housing
Meredydd Hughes – Assistant Director Building Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to recommend an improved system of managing gas and electricity supplies in local authority social housing dwellings when the property is void. This report will highlight the benefits a new system would offer tenants and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

2. Recommendations

2.1. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness notes the positive impact of the pilot with Utilita which includes, benefits to tenants and a more efficient process for officers and contractors.

2.2. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness agrees to a large scale pilot encompassing all of the housing stock for a maximum period of 2 years and requests a report to be brought back evaluating the impact of the pilot with a view to making the scheme permanent.

2.3. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness delegates to the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services to undertake all necessary and procedural actions to formalise the process for void energy management with a single supplier in the long term, undertaking a suitable procurement process if and when required.

2.4. That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness note that a review of Utilita's tariff rates will be undertaken on a quarterly basis, in line with the Energy Price Cap updates, to ensure that their rates meet or beat other available rates.

3. Background

- 3.1. Portsmouth City Council (the City Council), through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), is a social landlord with approximately 15,000 properties in Portsmouth and the Havant areas. Typically, it has between 700-900 properties become empty (known as a 'void') each year. Whilst a property is empty, the council is responsible for the gas and electric supply to a void until a new tenancy begins.
- 3.2. When a tenant leaves a property, the supply may be with one of a large number of suppliers currently trading in the UK at the present time. Under the current system, the HRA takes on responsibility for the payment of bills to this incumbent supplier.
- 3.3. The outgoing tenant should ensure they contact the energy supplier to advise they are moving out and submit the latest meter reading. However, we have learnt during the Voids and Allocations systems thinking review, subsequent Roll in, and through the Covid 19 Pandemic, that in a significant number of cases this does not happen, meaning that the incoming tenant often doesn't know the energy supplier for the new property, and therefore has difficulty in making contact with the energy supplier to take on responsibility of the supply. This creates unnecessary confusion and disruption and is time consuming for the new tenant.
- 3.4. In February 2021 a pilot with Utilita was undertaken to improve the management of gas and electric supplies and the report in section 5 outlines the positive impact of that pilot.
- 3.5. In September 2021 a report was written and ready to present to Housing Cabinet, to recommend the roll out of the pilot across the whole of PCC social housing stock. The report was withdrawn on the day of the Housing Cabinet meeting, due to the crisis in the Energy Market. Utilita were unable to support an expansion of the scheme at that time and withdrew the service from the market.
- 3.6. Utilita reintroduced the service in April 2023 and officers were able to revisit the discussions and bring forward this report for consideration.

4. Current system

- 4.1. As part of systems thinking work around how the voids process can be managed in a better way, it was identified that there are significant issues with the current system. These are split into four broad categories, all of which have an impact on the customer journey and cost to the HRA as demonstrated below:
 - 4.1.1. Credit meters: bills continue to be sent to the property in the council's name after the new tenant has moved in. This creates an administrative burden of moving utility accounts into tenants' names. In addition human error is often encountered when transferring final meter readings onto various supplier portals.

Customers often have to provide their tenancy agreement to the energy supplier to evidence they have moved in, sometimes taking numerous days and multiple phone calls to get the account liability changed.

Where the City Council receives a bill it is not liable for, it has to make contact with the customer to gain permission to share a copy of their tenancy agreement with the energy supplier. This process can take between 30 minutes and a number of hours, assuming that the customer gives permission.

If the customer does not give permission, the bills continue to be sent to the City Council. If the City Council cannot get a resolution it may be required to pay the ex-tenant's outstanding bill, which ultimately becomes a cost to the rest of the HRA.

- 4.1.2. Key and card meters: A large amount of time is spent by staff and contractor operatives when replacing key cards from the utility suppliers via a local retailer. Time is spent topping up meters to clear debt and to enable works to be undertaken during the void period. If the previous tenant has left a large debt on the meter, the incoming tenant often has a lengthy negotiation with the energy supplier to get this debt removed. The energy provider often has to make a visit to the property to remove the debt, and they will not do this until such time as a tenant has moved in.
- 4.1.3. Pre-payment smart meters: An administrative burden is created as suppliers are contacted to switch the liability into the City Council's name when the ex-tenant has moved out. This is needed to ensure the property has a gas and electric supply to undertake works in the property during the void period. Each call takes approximately an hour. When the new tenant moves in, they have to follow the same procedure, spending a further hour trying to get through to the correct supplier.
- 4.1.4. Standing charges: the majority of suppliers charge 'standing charges', with the July 2023 Price Cap setting charges at 58.08p/day for electricity, and 37.80p/day for gas for Prepayment meters, and 52.97p/day for electricity, 34.34p/day for gas for credit meters. The average void period is 45 days.
- 4.2. In the financial year 2022/23, the HRA spent approximately £51,000 paying for gas and electric in void properties for credit meters; largely in standing charges.
- 4.3. In 2022/23, repairs and maintenance contractors spent £22,790 topping up gas and electric meters.
- 4.4. Dealing with each property takes on average of two hours of officer time to collect meter readings, contacting the energy supplier, physically going to a shop and topping up the meter and dealing with the clerical side of paying a bill. This equates to a total of 1,800 hours spent dealing with this issue, equating to approximately £40,000 based on a Band 7 Housing Officer scale.



- 4.5. Therefore the total budgetary impact on the service is approximated to be £113,800 per annum.
- 4.6. The incoming tenant is further impacted by having to contact the energy supplier when they move into their new home so the liability can be changed over. This takes at least an hour once they know who their energy supplier is.

5. Pilot of a new scheme - February 2021

- 5.1. In February 2021 a pilot project began to provide a different way of handling gas and electricity supplies during a void. This was working with a company called Utilita Energy Limited to offer a solution for these issues, and no commitment requiring a formal procurement process has been undertaken at this time.
- 5.2. Starting in the Paulsgrove area, new voids, long term voids and those undergoing improvement projects have their energy supply switched using the online Utilita portal. When the property is void, the meter resets to 50p credit with £15 emergency credit usage for the void period. The account is switched into City Council's name.
- 5.3. If the property doesn't have a compatible smart meter at the start of the void, Utilita schedule an appointment whilst the property is void to change the meter.
- 5.4. When the new tenant accepts the property and a new tenancy start date is agreed, the name and tenancy start date is inputted into the Utilita portal and the account is switched into their name. £5 is credited to both gas and electric for when the customer moves in.
- 5.5. Importantly, the new tenant is under no obligation to stay with Utilita and are free to switch to alternate energy suppliers at any time. The Switched On Portsmouth service includes an energy switching website, which can assist tenants to find the best possible tariff for their circumstances. Additionally, the Switched On Portsmouth team can provide support to residents when undertaking an energy supplier switch.
- 5.6. As of the 6th September 2021, a total of 519 properties have been switched to Utilita during the pilot. Of these, properties;
 - 5.6.1. 84 were project voids (saving the City Council money in standing charges)
 - 5.6.2. 57 new tenants have moved in and switched to a new energy supplier (away from Utilita)
 - 5.6.3. 345 additional smart meters have been installed in local authority properties.
- 5.7. Customer feedback has been positive as they have one less bill to deal with when moving into their new home and can address their energy supply at a time suitable for them.
- 5.8. From the pilot it has been learnt that there is the required amount of time between the ex-tenant ending and the property becoming void to enable Utilita to get the



switch facilitated in a timely manner. This also gives Utilita more time to schedule an appointment for switching the meter if required.

5.9. The amount of time spent on the phone to gas and electricity suppliers in the voids process has significantly reduced.

5.10. As, in the non-pilot system there is a time lag between the tenant moving out and the energy supplier sending the City Council the bill, it is difficult to measure the financial impact.

6. Roll out across the whole Social Housing Stock - applying the scheme to all void properties

6.1. In order to continue to learn the effectiveness of the large scale pilot for tenants and the City Council, it is recommended that all HRA dwelling stock should be added to the pilot, for a minimum period of two years. This will enable full understanding of:

- 6.1.1. the impact on the bills coming through to finance,
- 6.1.2. the ability for Utilita to service the level of demand, and
- 6.1.3. the ongoing needs of our customers.

6.2. This large scale pilot will continue to benefit the incoming tenant by:

- 6.2.1. The customer moves into their new property knowing their energy supplier
- 6.2.2. The gas and electric has £5 credited on each meter
- 6.2.3. Vulnerable customers are immediately supported by being placed on the Priority Services Register with Utilita to ensure they are dealt with as a priority should there be a disruption to the service.
- 6.2.4. Installation of SMART meters with in-home display to help households better understand their energy consumption.
- 6.2.5. Residents being able to remotely top up their meters 24/7.
- 6.2.6. Residents will be eligible for the Warm Homes Discount.

6.3. This large scale pilot will continue to benefit the City Council, and therefore onto the HRA, by:

- 6.3.1. Utilita providing a single business partner for all query management.
- 6.3.2. Providing access to a single customer portal to make switches simply and easily.
- 6.3.3. Timescales for switches being having a fixed maximum period of time of 21 days for gas and 14 days for electric.
- 6.3.4. Providing the HRA with a referral fee per fuel switched, which will go toward the offset of costs.
- 6.3.5. There being no standing charges for the City Council or the tenants.
- 6.3.6. There being no requirement on the City Council to undertake debt clearance.

- 6.3.7. A reduction in the volume of bills being handled by the City Council's purchase to pay team.
- 6.4. The council understands that many of the tenants coming into the new properties following the void period will be sensitive to high energy bills. A cost analysis of Utilita's prepayment tariff before the Energy Crisis was undertaken in 2021 to assess the rates of Utilita against other options available, to ensure that a customer who chose to stay with Utilita would not be adversely affected by high bills. Details were correct as of the 9th September 2021 and represented a property with annual fuel consumption of 2,900 kWh of electricity and 12,000 kWh of gas:
- 6.4.1. Utilita's prepayment tariff would have resulted in an annual bill of £1,136.
 - 6.4.2. The UK's largest energy supplier's prepayment tariff would have resulted in bills of £1,309.
 - 6.4.3. The Prepayment Meter Cap, set by the energy regulator, Ofgem, was £1,309 from the 1st October 2021.
 - 6.4.4. Ogem's Default Tariff Cap (standard variable tariffs), which applies to credit meters, was £1,277
- 6.5. Following the crash of the energy market in 2021, energy suppliers are currently unable to offer a competitive unit rate. All are bound by the Ofgem Price Cap, which sets a maximum charge per unit of electricity and gas.
- 6.5.1. The Energy Price Cap is reviewed quarterly, in order to reflect the fast-paced nature of the energy market.
 - 6.5.2. From 1st July 2023 the Energy Price Cap will set unit rates for prepayment meters at 29.06p/kWh for electricity and 7.11p/kWh for gas
 - 6.5.3. The Energy Price Cap for credit meters will be 31.72/kWh for electricity and 7.91p/kWh for gas, where bills are paid on receipt of a bill.
 - 6.5.4. The average cost households can expect to pay under this Price Cap is £2,075 p/a.
- 6.6. The next quarterly review is due in October 2023, so these rates are subject to change. Following recent reductions in wholesale costs, it is possible that this rate will reduce, and that energy suppliers will be able to offer more competitive rates.
- 6.7. A review of Utilita's tariff rates will be undertaken on a quarterly basis, in line with the Energy Price Cap updates, to ensure that their rates meet or beat other available rates, to continue to ensure that tenants will not be adversely affected by high bills should they continue to stay with Utilita as their Energy Supplier after moving into a void.

7. Reasons for recommendations

- 7.1. Under the current non-pilot system, the customer moving into a Local Authority Housing managed property has the burden of finding who their new energy provider is, making contact, and then switching the account into their name, sometimes taking multiple phone calls and hours of time.
- 7.2. It is additional, without a formalised process for managing voids' energy requirements, there is a financial impact upon the HRA.
- 7.3. Utilita's void process agreement ensures that neither the Council nor the tenant are tied into a contract; and can move away with no penalty.
- 7.4. The pilot has been a success in terms of turning a time-consuming and costly process into a much more streamlined protocol, which is actually cost positive to the service. The early results are positive for the tenant and the City Council.
- 7.5. As a result of the positive pilot, officers now wish to enact a wider rollout to all of the housing stock. This expansion would begin immediately following the approval.
- 7.6. Once the Large Scale pilot period is complete, consideration will be given to the results, and if a full procurement is required, this can be implemented.

8. Integrated impact assessment

- 8.1 An integrated impact assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix 1.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. Depending on the nature and the value of the arrangement proposed in the main body of this report, this arrangement may be subject to public procurement under the Public Concessions Regulations 2016. In addition, this arrangement may also be subject to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules which govern procurement matters.
- 9.2. It is understood that once the property becomes "void" and the account is put into the Council's name, Utilita also becomes the Council's gas and electricity provider and, as a result, this arrangement becomes a contract potentially subject to procurement. Legal and procurement advice shall be sought to ensure compliance with any internal and external rules and the relevant legislation.
- 9.3. Regarding the passing of the tenants' details to Utilita, the instructing officer shall seek advice from Legal Services and the Data Protection Team to ensure that the Council complies with the relevant legal obligations under the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 (and all other relevant legislation and guidance as may be applicable from time to time in relation to data processing). It should be noted that relying on a consent given in a tenancy agreement may not be sufficient due to unequal bargaining powers between the parties hence it is important to ensure appropriate advice is sought at a timely manner and in any event before this



arrangement with Utilita materialises and any personal data is shared with the company.

10. Director of Finance's comments

- 10.1 The SMART meter system allows the Council to more accurately measure a meter reading on a particular day, this will ensure that when one tenancy ends and another begins the Council can accurately assess the cost of electricity or gas used and therefore the cost associated with utilities should be more accurate.
- 10.2 This also means that there is no requirement for the contractor to try and load a meter with credit which uses up the time of an operative and causes additional administration which should help the Repairs and Maintenance budget realise efficiency savings.
- 10.3 In addition, if the revised process is extended across the whole housing portfolio efficiency savings in the form of staff resources of £40,000 per annum may be achieved.
- 10.4 For each fuel which is switched in a void, the Council are paid £20, there are around 900 voids a year so that could total £36,000 in additional income a year. However this will only materialise if a customer is not with Utilita prior to the property becoming void.

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Signed by: James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Integrated impact assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

Form name	Integrated Impact Assessment
Reference	IA522474678
Date	08/06/2023



Policy details

Request date	08/06/2023 14:30
Directorate	PCC Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services
Service	Voids Energy Management
Title of policy, service, function	An improved system of managing the issue of gas and electricity supplies in HRA dwellings when the property is void
Type of policy, service, function	New
What is the aim of your policy, service, function, project or strategy?	An improved system of managing the gas and electric fuel usage of a void of a property. The proposal improves the customer journey and reduces the time and cost to the Council.
Has any consultation been undertaken for this proposal?	no

Equality & diversity - will it have any positive/negative impacts on the protected characteristics?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Crime - Will it make our city safer?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Housing - will it provide good quality homes?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Health - will this help promote healthy, safe and independent living?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	All new tenants will know who their energy provider is from day 1. They will have the ability to change to any provider of their choice, and can be supported with this via the Switched on Portsmouth Team.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	We will measure how many new tenants switch provider or remain with Utilita throughout the pilot.

Income deprivation and poverty - will it consider income deprivation and reduce poverty?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	Utilita are a Warm Home Discount eligible company meaning customers on a low income will be able to apply for the support under the scheme.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	We are able to ask Utilita for a list of customers who have applied for the grant where we have switched the supply. When a customer moves into a property, we can also complete the application process with them when the scheme is open to applications.

Carbon emissions - will it reduce carbon emissions?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>Utilita will be installing Smart Meters to all Void properties, therefore all new tenants will be able to see and manage their energy consumption more easily, and hopefully reduce overall energy consumption.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Regular feedback from all new tenants on their use of the smart meters.</p>

Energy use - will it reduce energy use?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>The installation of smart meters eliminates manual monthly meter readings, monitors the electric and gas system in real time, encourages more efficient use of energy, provides responsive data for balancing electric loads while reducing blackouts, enables dynamic pricing, allows the customer to see their energy usage and cost of fuel.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>We can monitor the number of smart meters being installed into void properties.</p>

Climate change mitigation and flooding - will it proactively mitigate against a changing climate and flooding?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Natural environment - will it ensure public spaces are greener, more sustainable and well-maintained?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Air quality - will it improve air quality?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	Gas consumption in domestic properties contributes to local air quality issues. Giving the tenants means, through provision of smart meters ,will reduce this consumption, and the associated NOx and other air pollutants.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	Through the numbers of smart meters provided.

Transport - will it make transport more sustainable and safer for the whole community?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Waste management - will it increase recycling and reduce the production of waste?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Culture and heritage - will it promote, protect and enhance our culture and heritage?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Employment and opportunities - will it promote the development of a skilled workforce?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Economy - will it encourage businesses to invest in the city, support sustainable growth and regeneration?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>A void property will be switched supplier to Utilita when the customer gives notice. The actual switching of supply takes at least 19 days and will be scheduled for on or after the void date.</p> <p>During the void period a smart meter will be installed by Utilita. The meter will be credited with 50p and will have £15 emergency credit for the council to use.</p> <p>When the customer moves into the property, the council will update the Housing Utilita Portal with the customer's name and tenancy start date putting the liability into the customer's name. The customer and council are not entered into a contract and therefore have the freedom to switch supply without penalty.</p> <p>The customer will know who their supplier is when they move into their new home and won't have the issue of contacting energy suppliers to get the liability switched into their name.</p> <p>The customer will benefit by knowing their energy supplier, being able to remotely top up their meters 24/7, having an SMART meter in the property with in-home display, won't have a previous customers / councils debt on their meters, being able to apply for the warm home discount if eligible.</p> <p>The council will benefit by having access to a customer portal to make switches simple and easy, no standing charges, reduce the volumes of bills sent to finance, the volume of time spent physically topping up the meters, volume of time on the phone to numerous energy suppliers as well as the amount of money clearing debts on meters caused by standing charges.</p>
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<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>We will continue to monitor the number of properties which are switched to Utilita with the customer moving away from the supply vs the number staying on supply. The council is provided with a weekly update as to how many properties have been fitted with a smart meter and how many more are scheduled.</p> <p>The council will be kept informed of the schedules and for installation of the smart meters.</p>
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Social value

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Involvement

<p>Who was involved in the Integrated impact assessment?</p>	<p>Previously Lauren Taylor and Andrew Waggott</p>
<p>Name of the person completing this form</p>	<p>Mark Fitch</p>
<p>Date of completion</p>	<p>2023-06-08</p>