



**Chair -
Councillor I Bevan**

Annual Report of the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

2021/2022 Muncipal Year



**Vice-Chair –
Councillor S
Henley**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters falling within the functions of the Directorates of Housing and Community Services and Public Realm and the Cabinet portfolios of appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

Housing White Paper (Tenants Charter)

The Committee considered a report on the Housing White Paper bringing a change in the relationship between the Regulator of Social Housing, social landlords and tenants which would develop into important legislation to incorporate the learning from the Grenfell fire tragedy and the last five years of regulatory approach.

Outcome:

- *That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee once the White Paper moved through Parliament into legislation.*

Overview of Safe and Sound (Dudley's Community Safety Partnership) and focus on Community Cohesion Strategic Group

The Committee considered a report on 10th June, 2021 on the work carried out by the Safe and Sound (Dudley's Community Safety Partnership) and to provide detail in respect of the work of the Community Cohesion Strategic Group.

Following the approval of a recommendation at the meeting held on 10th June, 2021, the Committee also considered a report on the progress in delivering the key priorities to tackle the most challenging issues for maintaining and improving community safety in Dudley.

Outcome of the meeting held on 10th June, 2021:

- *That the Director of Housing and Community Services submit a further report to the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 27th January, 2022.*
- *That the Director of Housing and Community Services be requested to circulate the e-Learning package to all Members of the Council on Modern Slavery.*

Outcome of the meeting held on 27th January, 2022:

- *That the information contained in the report and the comments made at the meeting, be noted.*

Public Forum - Housing Board/Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Association

The Committee heard representations from a member of the public in relation to an item on the Housing Board/Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Association (DFTRA) and tenant participation.

Outcome:

- *That the Deputy Chief Executive provide a detailed report on the Housing Board/Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Association (DFTRA) and tenant participation to a future meeting of the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.*

Use of Glyphosate for Weed Control

The Committee considered a report on the current position regarding Dudley Council's use of Glyphosate and to outline alternative treatments and methods that could be considered to reduce and/or eradicate its application for managing weed control in the Borough.

Outcomes:

- *That the information contained in the report, presentation, and as presented verbally at the meeting on alternative methods of weed control, subject to the approval of funding, be noted.*
- *That the Acting Head of Street and Green Care be requested to circulate risk assessments to Members of the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on the use of Glyphosate.*
- *That the issues raised during the discussion be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Public Realm for consideration.*

West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP) – Green Paper Engagement and LLP Programme

West Midlands Local Transport Plan – Engagement on the Draft West Midlands Local Transport Plan 5 Core Strategy

Representatives from Transport for West Midlands attended the Committee to provide an overview on the development of a new West Midlands Local Transport Plan including the publication of the transport Green Paper, proposed West Midlands Leaders' summit and COP26 prospectus, together with the wider programme for developing and adopting a new Local Transport Plan.

In consultation with the Chair of the Committee, it was agreed that a report be submitted to the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 30th March, 2022 to provide Members with an update on the development of a new West Midlands Local Transport Plan and in particular the engagement on the new Local Transport Plan Core Strategy, which commenced on 7th February 2022.

Outcome of the meeting held on 22nd September, 2021:

- *That the progress on development of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the publication of the West Midlands Transport Green Paper, be noted.*
- *That the planned approach for engaging with Leaders on key transport challenges through a transport 'summit' proposed to be held in September, be noted.*
- *That the high-level programme timescales for developing the core Local Transport Plan strategy through to Summer 2022, be noted.*
- *That the plan to publish a West Midlands Transport Plan Prospectus to tie into wider West Midlands representation at COP 26 in Glasgow in November, be noted.*

Future Council's Programme – Directorates of Housing and Community Services and Public Realm

The Committee was provided with a verbal presentation by the Deputy Chief Executive updating Members on the Future Council Improvement Programme specifically relating to the Directorates of Housing and Community Services and Public Realm.

Outcome:

- *That the information presented be noted and that a progress report be submitted to a future meeting of the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.*

Highway Maintenance (to include information on potholes/defects and general condition of roads)

The Committee considered a report on the condition of Dudley Council's Highway Network and outlining the maintenance processes in place, including details about reported defects (potholes) across the Borough.

Outcomes:

- *That the Council's efforts to manage the Highway Network in line with the principles and policies required to comply with the new Code of Practice "Well Managed Highway Infrastructure" be supported.*
- *That the issues with regard to the condition of local roads be noted and the measures and resources currently allocated to further clear the backlog of repairs be supported.*
- *That the Acting Director of Public Realm be requested to circulate information on the number of claims that had been received in relation to personal injury/damage to vehicles to all Members of the Committee.*
- *That the Acting Director of Public Realm be requested to circulate information on the use of slurry seals on pavements to all Members of the Committee.*

Establishment of a Scrutiny Working Group

At its meeting on 18th November, 2021, the Committee approved the establishment of a Scrutiny Working Group comprising all Members of the Committee to consider items within the terms of reference of the Scrutiny Committee.

Review of Housing Finance

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive (in relation to Housing and Community Services) and the Director of Finance and Legal on the Review of Housing Finance.

Outcome:

- *That the proposals considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 28th October, 2021, relating to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2022/23 onwards, be endorsed.*

- *That the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee on Dudley's response to climate change and future plans.*
- *That the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to provide a written response to all Members of the Committee on Dudley's response to tackling housing conditions in the Borough in line with the climate requirements.*
- *That the Finance Manager be requested to provide a written response to the Member of the Committee on specific information relating to the Beacon Rise development.*
- *That the Finance Manager be requested to circulate further information on other local authorities' debt levels to all Members of the Committee.*
- *That the Finance Manager be requested to arrange a site visit to allow Members of the Committee to view new housing opportunities and what the properties offered residents in the Borough.*
- *That the Finance Manager be requested to provide a report to a future meeting of the Committee on the impact of the restructure of Housing Services and the service improvements achieved.*
- *That the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to present the outcomes of ARK Consultancy exercise to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 27th January, 2022.*

Minutes

Councillor P Sahota commented that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th November, 2021 did not accurately reflect the comments made. Additional comments were incorporated in the minutes of the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee held on 27th January, 2022.

Outcome:

- *That the Acting Director of Public Realm be requested to provide information on the roads that had benefited from repairs over the last three years.*

Priorities for the Directorate of Housing and Community Services

The Committee considered a report on information on the UK Government White Paper on Social Housing published in November, 2020, a report from ARK Consultancy on the outcomes from a tenants survey and the priority recommendations from an experienced housing consultant, Duncan Forbes, who

was commissioned in October 2021 to carry out a review of the Directorate of Housing and Community Services and propose an improvement plan.

Outcome:

- *That the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to provide progress reports to future meetings of the Committee.*
- *That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on issues associated with anti-social behaviour.*

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Legal, Deputy Chief Executive, and Acting Director of Public Realm on the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2024/25, with emphasis on those proposals relating to the Committee's terms of reference. Items directly relevant to this Committee were those in relation to the Housing and Community Services and Public Realm Directorates.

Outcome:

- *That the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to provide Members of the Committee with details of the proposed plans for Cornbow Hall detailing consultation plans for the existing users/stakeholders and the plans leading up to the new arrangements, outlining options to be considered.*
- *That the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to provide Members of the Committee with a written assurance that any planned investment in the Public Realm Directorate would be delivered across all 24 wards in the Borough fairly with new criteria being considered and regular updates be provided to the Committee on progress.*

Other Items Considered by the Committee in the 2020/22 Municipal Year

Briefing Notes considered by the Committee through e-mail

- *Corporate Quarterly Performance Report*

Ongoing items for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee

Items requiring further scrutiny or to be included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2022/23 are listed below:-

- *Black Country Transport Hub Collaboration Agreement - (Deferred due to lack of information to be presented)*

- *Waste Strategy – (Deferred due to Strategy not being finalised)*
- *Housing White Paper (Tenants Charter)*
- *Progress report on the Future Council's Programme – Directorates of Housing and Community Services and Public Realm*
- *Dudley's response to Climate Change and Future Plans*
- *The Impact of the restructure of Housing Services and the service improvements achieved*
- *Progress report on Priorities for the Directorate of Housing and Community Services*
- *Issues associated with anti-social behaviour*