

## Scrutiny Committee

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Venue:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9FT
Date:	Thursday, 27 October 2022
Time:	5.00 pm
Present:	Councillors S Shaw-Wright (Chair), W Nichols (Vice-Chair), A Lee, R Sweeting, J Chilvers and K Ellis
Officers present:	Suzanne Sweeting, Partnerships Manager, Phil Hiscott, Strategic Asset Management and Property Services Manager, and Dawn Drury, Democratic Services Officer

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### **20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence had been received.

### **21 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **22 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There was no Chairs address.

### **23 NORTH YORKSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AND CHILDREN BOARDS ANNUAL REPORTS 2020-21 (S/22/8)**

The Committee received the report of the Partnerships Manager which asked Members to note the content of the Annual Report for the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board (NYSAB), and the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NYSCP) Independent Scrutineers Annual Report 2020-2021.

The Committee heard that the NYSAB Annual Report covered the activity in 2020-2021 and provided evidence of the key areas of focus for the current year, to provide leadership, challenge, and direction to ensure that partner agencies improved outcomes for adults at risk of harm or abuse.

Members noted that a Section 11 and governance audit had been developed with the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership, City of York Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children's Partnership; this reassured NYSAB that partner organisations had everything in place to deliver safeguarding effectively.

It was further noted that there had been a review of the guidance which had been written for responding to concerns about Persons in a Position of trust (PiPoT). This was where a concern related to someone's personal life, but which may also impact upon their job role, if that person worked with adults who had care and support needs.

The Committee were informed that over the year of 2020-21, 3456 safeguarding concerns had been received, this showed a decrease of 23% from the previous year.

In terms of agreed priorities for 2021-2023, Members noted that NYSAB would re-connect with local communities in North Yorkshire to raise awareness and develop strategies to address and reduce the risk of abuse. Ensure multi-agency safeguarding policies and procedures were in line with best practice to meet the needs of older and younger vulnerable people; and ensure that NYSAB was able to effectively adapt and respond to wider contextual changes affecting adult safeguarding.

The Committee heard that the NYSCP was a statutory body, led by an Executive which carried co-ordination and accountability responsibilities under the 4 Priorities "Being Young in North Yorkshire". It was confirmed that the 4 priorities were a safe life, a happy family life, a healthy life: and achieving in life.

It was highlighted that the Independent Scrutineers Annual report had identified that there were children and young people with special educational needs, with or without disabilities, who required additional support beyond the resources available, and that there had been an increase in family poverty caused by adults' job uncertainty, leading to a need for more access to free school meals or other practical support.

In terms of local delivery, the Committee acknowledged that Selby District Council actively participated in stakeholder meetings to include the Selby Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSP). Officers also managed the Safer Selby Hub, which addresses the issue of community safety, prevent and safeguarding. In 2020, the Council had supported the virtual campaign, Safeguarding Awareness Week; the overarching topic had been "Safeguarding is everybody's business", with a focus put onto how to report a concern.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to the use of acronyms within the report, what was being done to rectify the issue of low attendance at meetings, why there was no inclusion of statistics at a district level, and what actions were being taken to ensure that all carers were Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked, to ensure that

person's suitability to the job position. Finally, in terms of placing children into foster homes, it was queried what involvement the Board had in the process and with whom did the responsibility sit.

The officer stated that she would feed back the comments made by the Committee to the NYSCP Executive, and any formal response would be circulated to Members.

**RESOLVED:**

**To note the content of the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board and North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Independent Scrutineers Annual Reports 2020-2021.**

**24 UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S VOID PROPERTY PORTFOLIO (S/22/9)**

The Committee received the report from the Strategic Asset Management and Property Services Manager, which provided Members with an update on the current position in respect of void properties within the Council's residential property portfolio.

The officer explained that Selby District Council (SDC) currently owned circa 3,000 domestic properties across the district: with significant stock concentrations around the three main towns of Selby, Sherburn in Elmet and Tadcaster.

Members were informed that in April 2019, the Council had changed the way in which it recorded and reported on performance in respect of its domestic void properties, moving from a single target to three separate categories which better reflected the levels of work required in the properties being received back for re-letting.

The Committee acknowledged that under the previous single measure arrangement, void properties requiring extensive works had been classified as 'out of management' and thus 'hidden' from the performance measures until re-let.

The Committee were informed that the three new categories of voids were a standard void, a major void, and lastly, a refurbishment. In terms of a standard void, this was a property categorised as one which required minor repairs, compliance checks and cleaning only; this had a target for completion of the works of within 26 working days.

A major void was categorised as one which, in addition to the standard void works, required one of the major elements in the property replacing, for example a kitchen or bathroom; the target for completion in a major void was 45 working days. The refurbishment void had a target of 180 days and was categorised as one which required two or more of the major elements in the property replacing, and frequently required significant levels of investment to bring the property back to acceptable standards for re-letting.

It was highlighted that from across three previous financial years, refurbishment voids had accounted for approximately 34% of all voids, however an increasing number of properties returned to the Council had started to fall into the refurbishment voids category, and this figure had recently risen to 82%.

Members heard that one of the reasons for this was that 85% of the Council's existing housing portfolio was at least 50 years old, and with degradation of the properties over time this meant that alongside more routine elements such as new kitchens or heating systems, investment was required for the replacement of key elements such as new roofing.

The officer stated that following approval of the HRA Business Plan in 2019-2020, the introduction of significant capital investment had enabled the Council to review its approach to void delivery, ensuring funds were available to undertake the improvements needed to properties when they became vacant.

The Committee was informed that the Council currently had 87 void properties awaiting works, 12 completed voids ready for re-letting to prospective tenants, 1 completed void required for the resettlement programme, 2 specialist void properties being held for specialist adaptations: and 2 voids removed from the housing stock pending possible demolition and re-development.

In terms of the Council's Key Performance Indicator's (KPI's), Members noted that at the end of quarter one of 2022-23, performance against all KPI's was significantly ahead of target and comparable to other providers in the sector; and the trend in performance had been one of improvement.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the length of time that some properties were perceived to be empty with no visible works being undertaken, in particular this was felt to apply to one property in the area, and it was queried who monitored the works. The officer confirmed that the property in question required substantial work to bring it back into use. Members heard that when the property was returned to the Council and the contractors attended, it had been discovered that the building no longer had internal walls, a slope on a floor joist was discovered, and in addition the property required re-wiring and a dampproof course.

The officer confirmed that if the work was undertaken by the Council's asset team the work was monitored by a supervisor, however if the work was delivered by an external contractor, the Council had two contract officers who managed their performance.

Members stated that they understood that the properties had to be brought up to a particular standard but felt that the work must be completed at a quicker pace to provide high quality, safe and affordable homes for people within the district who needed them. The officer concurred with Members and advised that officers were focussed on refurbishing the void properties as swiftly as possible, and that this was a

key delivery ambition for the Council.

Further discussion took place regarding the void properties which had been identified for possible demolition, and it was queried why a qualified surveyor was not brought in at the onset, immediately following the return of the property to housing stock, to make an initial assessment. The officer confirmed that the Council did not use this approach, the initial assessments were undertaken by the Assets team, who had some very experienced officers in this area.

In response to a query regarding how many void properties requiring refurbishment were worked on at any one time, it was confirmed that the properties were worked on in batches of ten.

The Committee again raised their concern around the length of time taken to bring a void property up to the building regulations standard and back into circulation and urged prioritisation of these properties.

Members debated the report further and asked the officer several questions:

- Of the 87 void properties currently awaiting work, how long had each property been void.
- Of the 71 properties awaiting refurbishment, how many were carried forward from last year, 2021-22.
- To provide a month-by-month breakdown of what properties have become vacant and which properties have been re-let.
- To provide a list of void properties by area, along with the timescales to get the houses back into use.

The officer confirmed that he would circulate the figures requested to the Committee.

Finally, a Member queried what works were currently being undertaken at the Micklegate car park in Selby, in terms of the repairs required to the external lighting and the bollards which had been knocked down, and in relation to the Council's refurbishment plans for the districts car parks, at what stage were the team at with this work. The officer advised that he would investigate the issue and circulate a response.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. To note the content of the report.**
- ii. To ask the officer to provide figures relating to void properties, and at what stage in the work were the district car park refurbishment plans, as detailed above.**

**25 WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23**

The Committee considered the 2022-23 work programme as presented in the agenda.

Members were informed that, as requested, an officer from parking enforcement at North Yorkshire County Council had been invited to attend Committee to discuss the issue of on-street parking; it was confirmed that an officer would be present at the meeting due to take place on 24 November 2022.

**RESOLVED:**

**To note the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022-23.**

The meeting closed at 6.03 pm.