



NORWICH City Council

Committee name: Cabinet

Committee date: 06/03/2024

Report title: Response to the scrutiny committee recommendations on retrofitting

Portfolio: Councillor Hampton, Cabinet member for climate change, Councillor Jones, Deputy leader and Cabinet member for housing and community safety

Report from: Head of legal and procurement

Wards: All wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To note the written response to the recommendations made by the scrutiny committee at its meeting in November 2023

Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

- 1) cabinet notes the written responses in the report; and
- 2) notes that further written feedback on pending issues will be provided in due course.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city corporate priority

This report helps to meet [insert relevant name] adopted policy of the Council

Report details

1. At its meeting on 7 February 2024, cabinet received a verbal update on the recommendations from the scrutiny committee task and finish group on retro fitting.
2. The chair of the task and finish group requested that this be brought as a written update to the March meeting of cabinet.
3. The response to each recommendation is below. Cabinet is asked to note that some information is still pending and this will be circulated in due course.

	Recommendation	Comment	Proposed recommendation
a)	Recognise its key roles in essential decarbonisation, combatting fuel poverty and health and economic development, add retrofitting as a core and central theme to the new Corporate Plan.	Retrofitting is set to be a priority in the new corporate plan.	To include retrofitting as a priority in the Corporate Plan 2024-2029.
b)	Develop a state of evidenced readiness for future funding to allow quality funding applications to be submitted efficiently for all available funding opportunities.	This was an objective which was always aimed for, the current stock condition survey, consultant work to generate feasibility studies and options analysis and thermographic study of existing measures in homes would support this.	To continue to ensure a state of readiness across council teams to enable funding applications to be submitted efficiently for all available funding opportunities.
c)	Allocate sufficient resource to reach this state of readiness, enabling the council to plan strategically and to effectively manage projects, particularly in the housing team. Writing quality bids, planning strategically and managing the projects will take significant additional resource.	Councillor Jones acknowledged that it was essential to have the right mix of skills and noted that it was necessary to understand what was needed in terms of reviewing the data from the stock condition survey before this could be considered.	None proposed.

		Happy to continue conversation once position clearer.	
d)	Agree to monitor the effectiveness of the housing team restructure to ensure that the team includes the necessary skills and capacity to deliver retrofitting. Similarly, review the capacity of key support services in other teams within the council – e.g. procurement – to ensure an understanding and culture of retrofit.	As above.	None proposed.
e)	Offer ongoing training and advice, including site visits, to all councillors and staff in relation to retrofitting so that they can be a conduit for information to residents.	Opportunities which were appropriate to staff roles would be offered and for councillors training on signposting to existing schemes. It is not possible to commit to training for all staff.	To ask officers to ensure that training on retrofitting appropriate to staff roles is offered and; To arrange training for councillors on signposting to existing schemes and support.
f)	Aspire and plan to deliver retrofit services through its own companies. Long term, contracts need to be written with this possibility in mind, and development and business planning undertaken to support this as an income stream. This entails exploring opportunities for new builds in collaboration with Lion Homes, assessing the feasibility and ambition for Lion Homes to offer retrofit services, and consequently identifying the necessary support the	Councillor Jones was not adverse to the idea if it achieved best value for the Housing Revenue Account.	None proposed.

	company will require for successful implementation.		
g)	Examine Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) opportunities and ambition for income generation related to retrofit, and develop an early stage plan in readiness.	This could be something to discuss in the future currently it was important to focus on business as usual in terms of the role that NCSL had.	None proposed.
h)	Use the knowledge and experience of work already undertaken by Lion Homes to understand resident behaviours and identify the most effective way of communicating with residents around retrofit, as well as using research and experience from experts in this field.	A Retrofit Communications Plan and Engagement Strategy will be considered as part of the Citywide Climate Action Strategy. LH could feed experience in as part of this work.	None proposed.
i)	Develop a Retrofit Communications Plan and Engagement Strategy to share learning, best practice, and opportunities, and to ensure that local residents are well informed and engaged.	To be addressed via the Citywide Climate Action Strategy.	To ask officers to include a Retrofit Communications Plan and Engagement Strategy to share learning, best practice, and opportunities, and to ensure that local residents are well informed and engaged as part of the Citywide Climate Action Strategy.
j)	Play a leading role with its own estate, using public buildings and community centres as demonstrators to showcase and highlight the potential for retrofit whilst working with communities and community associations to help them unlock energy and carbon	Cllr Hampton considered the council were already working to achieve this. Supported retrofit of community centres but priority of HRA to retrofit homes. Other sources of funding could be explored.	To continue to seek to play a leading role in terms of retrofitting within the council's estate within the context of the resources and funding available.

	savings for community benefit.		
k)	Consider reworking the HRA business plan in order to deliver retrofitting at pace.	There are competing priorities to consider and could not commit to a specific allocation of resources at this time. It was not possible to commit to accelerate the programme of retrofitting as it was not clear what the result of the stock condition survey would be.	None proposed.
l)	Consider implementing an internal carbon value, alongside Net Present Value (NPV) modelling, to assess and capture the carbon benefits and implications of retrofitting the council's housing stock.	Happy to explore/consider, not possible to commit financially to implementing.	Awaiting further information
m)	Explore alternative funding, for instance community municipal bonds and other mechanisms in line with previous scrutiny recommendations. A project should be developed to fund the retrofit of community spaces or similar, in the near future, to start to build understanding and public support.	Talks were underway with Abundance and other providers with a view to a scheme being launched.	To explore launching a municipal loan scheme to fund retrofitting measures. To explore if extra sources of funding for retrofitting of community spaces can be obtained.
n)	Work with private sector investors to utilise potential external funding opportunities, i.e. in large scale heat networks.	The use of private sector investment was already being explored in relation to large scale heat networks, happy to accept recommendation.	To ask officers to explore working with private sector investors to utilise potential external funding opportunities, i.e. in large scale heat networks.
o)	Investigate the potential for additional funding	This opportunity was gone if indeed it every	None proposed.

	and partnership working resulting from the forthcoming County Deal, as has been the case from Manchester and Leeds' respective devolution deals.	really existed as there had been no explicit funding for net zero in the deal. Partnership working benefits would be explored but the council already worked in partnership at County-level on retrofit e.g. Norfolk Climate Change Partnership and Norfolk Warm Homes Partnership.	
p)	Explore the concept of "comfort charges", following the lead of other local authorities' trials, as a potential source of additional funding.		Awaiting further information
q)	Ensure that any contract for delivering retrofit delivers social value too.	Already a requirement of the Social Value Act.	None proposed.
r)	Assess the existing skills provision and capacity in the local economy, in partnership with other local authorities.	This work was acknowledged as required and Norfolk County Council were already assessing skills provision, had commissioned consultants and were working with Retrofit Academy CIC. As the County Council were the education authority it was appropriate that they led this work.	None proposed.
s)	Work with relevant partners, including trade unions, to ensure equal opportunities for all, including skill development, job creation, and community involvement, in the council's retrofit initiatives.	This recommendation goes in tandem with skills provision.	None proposed.

t)	Work with planning officers to use the National Planning Policy Framework to develop local supplementary planning documents to promote and enable retrofit, and to respond to the Future Homes Standard consultation.	This was a tool which could be used, as had been put into practice with the East Norwich development. The energy supplementary planning document for which set out the policy, principle and guidance for delivering sustainable energy in this strategic development area.	To continue to work with planning officers to use the National Planning Policy Framework to develop local supplementary planning documents to promote and enable retrofit.
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Implications

Financial and resources

- Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2022-26 and budget.

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