

AGENDA 8, Enc iii) Social housing decarbonisation and retrofitting properties

Executive Summary

The document discusses recent correspondence between Ashington Town Council and two housing providers - Bernicia Housing and Advance Northumberland - regarding plans to decarbonise and retrofit social housing properties in Ashington.

Key points:

Ashington Town Council wrote to the housing providers requesting information on their strategies and timelines for meeting the UK government's PAS 2035 standard on housing energy efficiency by 2035.

Bernicia Housing has a goal of getting 90% of its homes to SAP rating C by 2025/26, investing £10.5 million over 2022-2026. They secured over £400,000 in grants for pilot energy efficiency projects in 2021/22. They are undertaking a major retrofit program funded by £7.2 million from the Social Housing Decarbonization Fund.

Bernicia has appointed staff to engage and educate tenants before and after retrofit work. They aim to support tenants in understanding and using new energy efficient systems effectively.

Specific data for Bernicia properties in Ashington was requested but not yet provided due to budget preparations. Further follow up is suggested.

Advance Northumberland properties in Ashington comply with minimum energy efficiency standards for private rented sector. 540 properties are rated E or above. Major upgrades were done in 2014/15.

The Council will consider further actions, including following up with Bernicia for Ashington-specific data once budgeting is complete.

Correspondence

At a meeting of the Council's Climate Change and Environment Committee in September, it was agreed to write to social housing providers in Ashington to better understand plans to decarbonise housing stock to meet the UK Government's PAS 2035 standard.

As the first tier of local government, we have a deep commitment to sustainability and actively promote initiatives that reduce carbon emissions and enhance energy efficiency within our community. The UK Government's PAS 2035 standard serves as a crucial guideline to achieve these objectives while ensuring the comfort and well-being of our residents.

Specifically, the Council would appreciate any information you can share on the following:

1. ***Decarbonisation Strategy:*** The strategy and timeline for decarbonising your housing stock.
2. ***Retrofitting Plans:*** Specifically, we would like to know the number of properties that have been retrofitted, those currently in progress, and your plans for the remaining properties.
3. ***Resident Engagement:*** Any information on your methods of involving and informing residents about these important sustainability projects, which will help foster their understanding, support, and active participation in these initiatives.
4. ***Monitoring and Evaluation:*** We are keen to understand the mechanisms you have in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of the retrofitting projects and how these

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could be used to help us communicate the positive changes being brought to our community.

Ashington Town Council understand the potential positive impact that social housing providers can create by embracing sustainable practices and meeting the PAS 2035 standard but acknowledge the challenges that come with it. Retrofitting properties to meet the standard requires significant investment of time, resources, and funding, as well as expertise. Additionally, engaging and informing residents throughout the process can be a considerable task.

If we can better understand the plans in place, and the challenges, we can champion your contribution to the transformation of housing stock and a greener, healthier, and more resilient community for our residents.

We would welcome the opportunity to find out more, via presentation at our Climate Change and Environment Committee.

Responses received

Bernicia Housing

Bernicia has a Corporate Strategy commitment to ensure 90% of our homes reach SAPC or above by 2025/26 (some 5 years before requirements).

We are investing circa £10.5 million in energy efficiency during the term of our corporate strategy 2022-26. circa one thousand of our homes are undergoing energy efficiency improvements as a consequence of our WAVE 1 & 2 programmes. Our current average energy efficiency rating for all our homes is an SAP rating of 72.06, compared to a national average of 66 for all homes and 70 for all social homes. Currently 75% of our homes are at SAPC or above so we are well on our way to meeting our targets. When we carry out energy efficiency improvements, we put in place a variety of tenant support requirements.

The average Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) figure provided above was at financial year end 2022/2023. Our current average SAP is 72.14 and we are on target to achieve 72.35 by the end of this financial year. In July 2021, the Bernicia Board approved the acceleration of our SAP C investment programme, with the ambitious aim of achieving an energy efficiency rating of SAP “C” for over 90% of our homes by 31st March 2026 (this target is incorporated into our Corporate Strategy). The remaining properties will be carried out up to the 2030 (subject to being sustainable, practical, cost effective and affordable), some 5 years ahead of the government’s 2035 target.

As a part of our pilot SAP C projects in the previous financial year, we secured approximately £423k in grant funding for the installation of underfloor insulation to 52 homes (across the Northumbria County Council region), 28 Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar PV (as a part of renewable pilot projects in Norham & Seahouses) and the installation of External Wall Insulation (EWI) to 31 homes (South Moor and Ferryhill), building on our previous EWI projects in South Moor and Ferryhill.

Our Corporate Strategy commitment - As part of this, Bernicia, along with nineteen organisations, submitted a collaborative bid to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.1 as part of the NEY Net Zero Hub bid. Bernicia were successful in gaining the fourth highest grant allocation as part of this consortium. Our overall budget for this part of the programme (covering two financial years), including grant, is circa £7.2m. Works on the SHDF programme commenced on site in late July 2023 and to date we have

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completed 62 properties in Northumberland as a part of this programme. This retrofit programme is in addition to our separate major investment works programme which includes elements of energy efficiency improvements such as new double-glazed windows, new heating, doors, and insulation works.

The contractor delivering our SHDF programme has a dedicated Tenant Liaison Officer whose role is to liaise with tenants, educating them in the use of any new systems. In addition to this, as we believe that resident engagement is key to the success of retrofit, we have appointed a Retrofit Support Advisor whose role is to:

Visit tenants in their homes pre installation to explain the planned technologies, their benefits, their costs in use, how to reduce energy costs and how to use systems effectively.

Visit tenants in their homes to provide the necessary support post installation, reinforcing the information previously provided and building on the explanations of the systems given by the contractor, ensuring tenants understand how to use the systems efficiently and effectively, with support over the initial period and feeding back and resolving any concerns they may have.

Holding tenant engagement events to ensure buy in to the proposed works, and general education around fuel switching and other relevant energy or environmental advice.

The delivery of the programme is ensured by our Retrofit Manager and Retrofit Advisor, who are also able to support with resident engagement, along with our Environmental Sustainability Officer.

Sarah wrote back to request figures specific to Ashington, as follows:

Ashington Town Council is particularly interested in Ashington, are you able to draw down the information you have provided to reflect:

- ❖ Current average SAP figures based on Bernicia homes in Ashington.
- ❖ Energy rating SAP 'C' % for Bernicia homes in Ashington.
- ❖ Funding used to improve energy efficiency to Bernicia homes in Ashington.
- ❖ SHDF funded works programmes or plans that are specific to Ashington.
- ❖ Engagement and education carried out by Retrofit Manager, Retrofit Advisor, or Environmental Sustainability Officer specific to Ashington and Ashington residents.

Thank you very much for what you have provided which members will be interested to read. If you can attend a meeting of the committee, preferring to convey your ambitious plans in person, I would like to facilitate this, you and your colleagues would be most welcome.

At that time Bernicia were busy with their budget and not able to break down the data further but confirmed that all the current SHDF Wave 2.1 programme is being carried out in Northumberland.

Advance Northumberland

Advance have responded to advise that their homes are classed as privately rented, not social or affordable. They are therefore subject to Minimum Energy Efficiency (MEE) Standards for Private Rented. They have provided the details of their adherence which is copied below:

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Within Ashington (including North Seaton), we have 540 x properties, all of which are rated E or above. Our property management software does not have the facility to record when each property was upgraded, just the dates of surveys, but the majority were upgraded as part of modernisation and sustainability works undertaken in 2014/15. The breakdown of the ratings is below for reference.

Rated B - 11

Rated C - 183

Rated D - 326

Rated E – 20

The Council is asked to agree any further action, which could include writing back to Bernicia as they come out of the busy budget period.