

Scrutiny Bulletin: 9 January 2023

Title of Update: Council Housing Retrofit Programme

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Completed retrofit properties in Burnthouse Lane (below left) and Russet Avenue (below right)



## 1. What is the update about?

In 2020, the Housing Service developed an approach to meet the city council's corporate objective to achieve net zero by 2030. The Service's strategy was to develop and deliver a retrofit programme of energy efficiency work to the existing housing stock. This focus was to alleviate fuel costs for those residents who lived in our stock with the worse energy performance.

The Council secured £1.6m of Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery funding from Government to help deliver this improvement and 420 properties have been refurbished to the standards reported below.

This update provides the outcomes from the recent delivery programme, including tenant involvement, the energy improvements and the carbon reductions achieved for the properties.

## 2. Background

The initial project overarching aims were to;

- Engage our tenants in work to reduce their carbon footprint
- Reduce fuel use and therefore, costs, for our tenants
- Reduce carbon impact
- Improve our Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) to at least a Band C rating where practicable
- Prioritise our least efficient fuel-use stock (EPC Bands D-G)
- Secure external funding

Following a series of initial workshops across the service and with our contractors, the following delivery objectives were agreed:

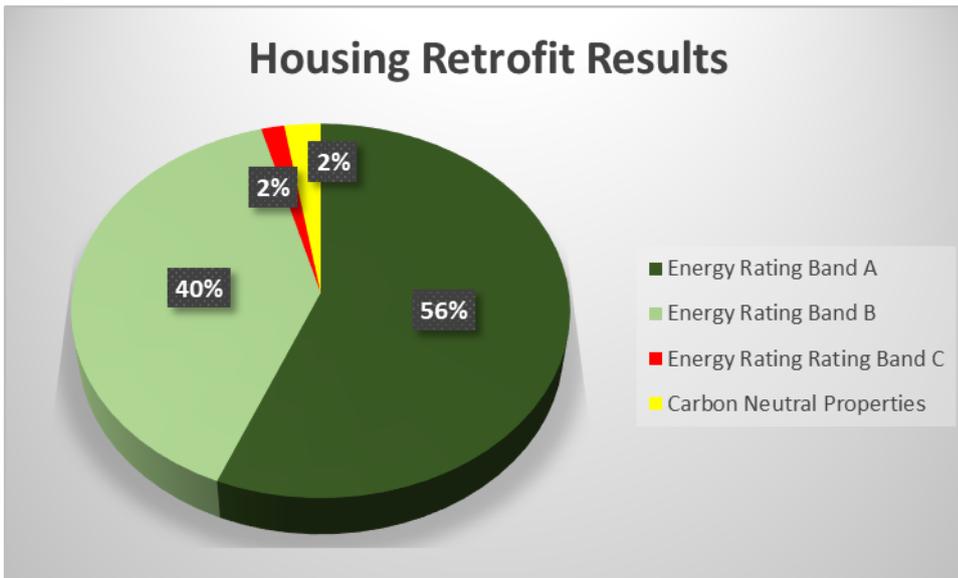
- Engage tenants to promote an understanding of carbon impact
- Support the city's wider carbon net zero vision
- Contribute to our future asset investment strategy
- Test a representative sample of the stock demographic (circa.10%)
- Incorporate retrofit works as a business as usual activity
- Develop our retrofit specification and ER's
- Integrate low carbon & renewable technologies where practicable
- Reduce fuel use for our tenants
- Mitigate the impact of fuel costs
- Protect our assets
- Monitor and measure outcomes

## 3. Current position

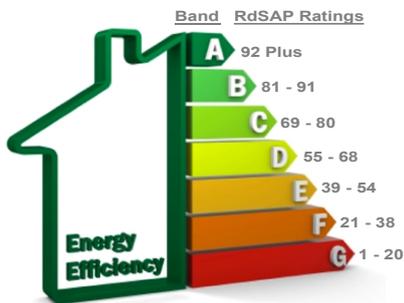
The following energy efficiency measures were introduced:

- Removal of failed cavity wall insulation
- Removal of historic debris and rubble left behind when previous insulation was installed
- Roofs and roofline repairs and renewals
- Installation of new thermally-efficient & low-carbon cavity wall insulation
- New loft insulation
- New renewable Solar PV systems
- New highly-efficient replacement heating systems where required
- Smart heating controls fitted
- Windows and Doors replacements
- Smart meters installed
- Monitoring and management support for tenants
- New tenant energy efficiency booklets published and distributed

Results achieved to date:



- 240 (56%) properties achieved the highest rating (Band A)
- 11 of the above properties achieved a rating of net-zero carbon
- 169 (40%) properties achieved the 2nd highest rating (Band B)
- 7 properties failed to meet target, 4 due to inadequate heating systems & 3 refusal to access properties to complete works



Average energy rating of properties before retrofit - 55 (Low Band D)

Average energy rating of properties after retrofit - 90 (Very High Band B)



Average CO2 emissions for regulated energy Pre Works 4.01 Tonnes

**Average CO2 Emissions Post Works 0.52 Tonnes**

## Tenant Feedback

Tenants are at the heart of this work. A group of Energy Champions has been formed and provide feedback on completed retrofit works. This helps us to gauge the success of the installations and provide energy data to enable the Council to track savings achieved/cost increases mitigated.

Energy Champions are contacted once a quarter and asked to provide meter readings (gas and electric) and to provide feedback on how the properties are performing. They have also been requested to, where possible, provide historic energy consumption information so that their usage can be compared to previous years, prior to the energy improvement works being completed. The tenants are encouraged to act as champions in their neighbourhood and community, and participate in promotional work. One Energy Champion has been interviewed by BBC's Spotlight to highlight the positive benefits of the project.

Some of the feedback from the initial survey has confirmed the following;

- All tenants understood why the works had been carried
- All tenants perceived that they were warmer in their homes and were saving money
- Two of the Group stated that pre-works information and communication could have been more detailed by the Contractor – procedures have been amended accordingly
- All tenants stated that the Contractors were polite and courteous
- One tenant fed back that work was not completed to his satisfaction – this related to more measures being requested which are currently not part of the installation package

## 4. Future position

The Housing Service is continuing the retrofit programme across the remainder of our stock, financed through the Housing Revenue Account. This will reduce the number of properties completed each year due to budget limitations - a delivery timescale is currently being developed. However, Government grant is currently available via the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and a bid is being prepared for submission.

The performance results from the 420 completed properties continue to be analysed to ensure that we develop the optimum retrofit model and accurate specification for future work. There is clearly a balance to be struck between maximising the energy performance of properties and the associated SAP rating with the affordability of the works programme for all Council properties in the shortest timescale possible. The revised Housing Asset Management Plan due to be published early 2023 will set the future delivery strategy, including programme timescales and any associated off-setting requirements.

## 5. Conclusion

It is now evident that the immediate impact of the retrofit installations is more likely to result in mitigating recent exceptional energy cost increases for tenants rather than delivering significant reductions in spend on utility bills. This is, however, a positive outcome during a volatile period of energy cost inflation.

Employment and training opportunities will be incorporated into the retrofit activity, particularly in relation to the creation of Apprenticeship opportunities in procured Contracts.

Every effort will be made to maximise the benefits resulting from retrofit programme of investment within the local economy.