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Housing Scrutiny Committee

HSC/1

Tuesday, 19 June 2018

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 June 2018

5.30 - 9.35 pm

Present: Councillors Todd-Jones (Chair), Bird (Vice-Chair), Cantrill, McGerty, Payne, Sheil, Thittala and Thornburrow

Executive Councillor for Housing: Kevin Price

Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives: Lulu Agate, Diane Best, Kay Harris and Diana Minns (Vice Chair).

Officers:

Strategic Director: Suzanne Hemingway

Strategic Director: Fiona Bryant

Development Manager: Mark Wilson

Business Manager & Principal Accountant (Shared Housing Finance Team):
Julia Hovells

Head of Housing: David Greening

Residential Team Manager, Environmental Health: Claire Adelizzi

Resident Engagement Officer: Emily Watts

Growth Projects Officer (Community & Culture): Julian Adams

Committee Manager: Toni Birkin

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

Change to Published Agenda Order

Under paragraph 4.2.1 of the Council Procedure Rules, the Chair used his discretion to alter the order of the agenda items. However, for ease of the reader, these minutes will follow the order of the agenda.

18/16/HSC Apologies

Apologies were received from Tenant Representative John Marais and Mandy Powell-Hardy.

Apologies were also noted from Councillor Barnett (alternate Councillor) who had hoped to be able to attend the tenant representative briefing.

Thanks to John Marais for services over many years.

The Committee noted the resignation of tenant representative, John Marais. Members and officers thanked him for his time and commitment over the years.

The Committee also sent its best wishes to tenant representative Mandy Powell-Hardy who was unwell.

18/17/HSC Appointment of Vice-Chair (Tenant/Leaseholder Rep) for 2018/19

Diana Minns was appointed as Vice Chair (Tenant / Leaseholder Representative) for 2018/19.

18/18/HSC Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Cantrill	18/28/HSC	Personal and Prejudicial: Is a Trustee of Wintercomfort. Took no part in the decision.
Councillor Price	All	Personal: Director of Cambridge Investment Partnership (appointed by Cambridge City Council).

18/19/HSC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 17th January 2018 were approved and signed as a correct record.

18/20/HSC Public Questions

Chris Jenkin addressed the Committee regarding minute item 18/29/HSC. His comments can be found with the minutes for this item.

18/21/HSC To Note Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Housing

6a Garage Rent Increase Transitional Protection

This item was Chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair / Tenant Representative)

The Committee noted the decision.

18/22/HSC Tenant Representative Vacancy

This item was Chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair / Tenant Representative)

Matter for Decision

On 25th May 2018 we received a resignation from John Marais from his position as Tenant Representative on the Housing Scrutiny Committee; this would take effect from 25th June 2018. The report set out the requirement of the Committee to co-opt a person in to the vacant position. It also provided details of potential options available to identify an eligible person.

Decision of the Committee

- i. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing, Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson, to consider the options for representative replacement outside of the committee meeting and report back to the Committee ahead of the autumn cycle.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Resident Engagement Officer.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Expressed support for the approach of contacting candidates who had previously stood in Tenant and Leaseholder Representative elections.
- ii. It was suggested that, as there had been one other candidate in the 2016 election, the first step should be to contact that person.
- iii. Members were unhappy about any other approach which might involve a selection process.
- iv. Tenant representative reminded the Committee that there was a single criterion for tenant or leaseholder representative and that was that they must be a tenant or leaseholder.
- v. Holding another election was discussed. It was agreed that this could be costly and time consuming.
- vi. It was suggested that a more pragmatic approach might be needed.

The Committee unanimously approved the recommendations.

18/23/HSC 2017/18 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances - Housing Revenue Account

Recommendation 2a (decision i) was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair / Tenant Representative) and recommendations 2b (decision ii) was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones.

Matter for Decision

The report presented, for the Housing Revenue Account:

- i. A summary of actual income and expenditure compared to the final budget for 2017/18 (outturn position)
- ii. Revenue and capital budget variances with explanations
- iii. Specific requests to carry forward funding available from budget underspends into 2018/19.
- iv. A summary of housing debt which was written off during 2017/18.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved carry forward requests totalling £698,690 in revenue funding from 2017/18 to 2018/19, as detailed in **Appendix C** of the Officer's report.
- ii. Approved the carry forward requests of £3,798,000 in HRA and General Fund Housing capital budgets and associated resources from 2017/18 to 2018/19 to fund re-phased net capital spending, as detailed in **Appendix D** and the associated notes to the appendix of the Officer's report is recommended to Council.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Business Manager / Principal Accountant.

The Committee sought clarification regarding the reduction in spending on temporary housing.

The Business Manager / Principal Accountant stated the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Fluctuation in spending on temporary housing was normal as the service was demand led.
- ii. Sheltered Housing costs had been reduced due to improvement in procurement processes which had resulted in savings.
- iii. Confirmed that there had been a number of changes in the delivery of planned maintenance work and that the planned programme of works had been reconfigured. Going forward, improved results were expected.
- iv. Confirmed that there had been delays in occupancy of new build properties as the quality of the workmanship on the build had been poor. The Council had refused to take the properties until remedial work had brought them up to an acceptable standard.
- v. Confirmed that there were still problems in recruiting to some key posts due to the high cost of living in the Cambridge area.
- vi. The Business Manager / Principal Accountant undertook to investigate the increased spending on responsive repairs to flat roofs.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

18/24/HSC 2017/18 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances - General Fund

This item was Chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The report presented, for the General Fund Housing portfolio :

- i. A summary of actual income and expenditure compared to the final budget for 2017/18 (outturn position)
- ii. Revenue and capital budget variances with explanations
- iii. Specific requests to carry forward funding available from budget underspends into 2018/19.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider and make known their views on the proposals for consideration by the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources at the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 2 July 2018.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved carry forward requests totalling £348,120 revenue funding from 2017/18 to 2018/19, as detailed in **Appendix C** of the Officer's report, noting that none are proposed for this portfolio on this occasion.
- ii. Carry forward requests of £200,000 in capital resources from 2017/18 to 2018/19 to fund re-phased net capital spending, as detailed in **Appendix D** of the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Business Manager / Principal Accountant

In response to Members' questions the Business Manager / Principal Accountant confirmed that there had been delays to the delivery of the Clay Farm Community Centre which had resulted in increased costs. She confirmed that the matter was under investigation and more information would follow.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

18/25/HSC New Social Housing, Community Centre and Commercial Units on Akeman Street

This item was Chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The report sought approval for the delivery route and a revised capital budget for a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) site at 74-82 Akeman Street. The scheme was based on the indicative capacity study which had been undertaken for the site and the outline appraisals referenced as detailed in the Officer's report.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the indicative mix of the proposed scheme to include a mix of affordable housing (8 one bedroom flats and 6 two bedroom flats), 3 replacement commercial units and a replacement community centre.
- ii. Noted the replacement of 82 Akeman Street with a City Council managed centre which was approved as priority as part of the Community Centres Strategy as the evidence base supports it being a strategically important centre due to its area of high need for outreach
- iii. Approved the indicative capital budget for the scheme of **£3,731,180** to cover all of the construction costs, professional fees and associated fees to deliver a scheme that meets an identified housing need in Cambridge City as well as re-providing the community spaces and commercial units. An indicative budget of £4,118,680 was included in the Housing Capital Investment Plan approved in January 2018, recognising the desire to be in a position to proceed with the higher density scheme.
- iv. Approved that the site was offered to Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) to progress for development to deliver a scheme which will meet the strategic aims of the Council in the delivery of new social housing. The scheme would be developed in accordance with the CIP process which was approved at Strategy & Resources Committee on 9th October 2017.
- v. Noted that the Executive Councillor had a delegated authority to approve the transfer of land to CIP for the redevelopment of the site at a later date. This would be subject to CIP demonstrating that its development proposal meets the Council's strategic aims for the site and the development and delivery milestones are in accordance with the CIP Approvals Process agreed at Strategy & Resources Committee on 9th October 2017.
- vi. Approved the cost of the community centre re-provision in line with Local Plan policy 5/11 (Protection of Existing Facilities), to be met from the HRA as part of the overall scheme cost, as there would be a planning requirement (as part of the Local Plan) to re-provide this to allow the housing development to proceed.
- vii. Approved the cost of the commercial provision to be met from the HRA, as the existing commercial offering on the site is HRA owned, with the assumption that the ongoing revenue stream would also fall to the HRA to replace that lost through the vacation and demolition of the existing provision. Consideration had been given to the General Fund acquiring the commercial units either at the outset or in the future, and the Officer's report recommended this option was considered in the future, if deemed appropriate, with all the required transactions and resulting impact between the two funds fully quantified

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Housing Development Officer.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Welcomed the assurance that existing tenants would be able to return to the site if they choose to do so.
- ii. Discussed concerns that existing commercial traders were not guaranteed the return and if they choose to do so would face higher rents.
- iii. Stated that they were small traders who provided a service to the community.

In response to Members' questions Strategic Director (Fiona Bryant) confirmed that the Hill Group would deliver the build in a timely fashion. They would recruit staff as required for the various sites they were delivering across the area.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

18/26/HSC Investing in Affordable Housing

This item was Chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

- i. The purpose of the report was to set out the way in which commuted s106 funds, paid by developers in lieu of affordable housing, could be spent.
- ii. The council's existing policy on spending housing related s106 developer contributions dates back to 2005. The policy needed to be updated so that any available funds could be spent appropriately to meet strategic priorities.
- iii. The report proposed that the Council utilised housing capital receipts to increase the supply of affordable housing. The sums received should be

made available, initially, to provide new affordable housing via Council's own new-build programme.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Agreed that decisions around spending of developer contributions earmarked for new affordable housing were generally made based on the following order of priority:
 - a. To help fund new affordable housing as part of the council's own house building programme;
 - b. To enable the council to purchase new homes to meet affordable housing needs;
 - c. To help fund affordable housing to be developed by other Registered Providers.
- ii. Agreed that exceptions to recommendation 2.1 (decision i) may apply in specific circumstances – e.g. if a home is needed for a disabled applicant and it can be provided more appropriately or cost-effectively by another Registered Provider; subject to Executive Councillor approval.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Growth Projects Officer (Community & Culture).

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Sought clarification regarding geographical area eligible for projects.
- ii. Discussion of points to be raised in the response to mixed funding of sites.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

18/27/HSC Discharging Homelessness Duties in the Private Rented Sector

This item was Chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

- i. In June 2013, in response to the Localism Act 2011, the Community Services Scrutiny Committee approved a policy of discharging the full housing duty to homeless households by way of a private rented sector offer. A further element of that policy was that an offer outside of the city may be considered suitable, subject to certain tests, so long as the accommodation was located within the Cambridge or Huntingdon broad rental market areas (BRMAs).
- ii. The report sought approval for a more flexible policy when assisting homeless households into the private rented sector.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the contents of the report in relation to the additional demands engendered by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- ii. Approved the Adoption of the policy on sourcing housing options in the private rented sector and discharging homelessness duties, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Head of Housing.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Praised the services already provided to housing applicants.
- ii. Discussion of points to be raised in the response to additional pressures that may arise due to widened criteria for homelessness application criterion.
- iii. Expressed concerns that homelessness duties could be discharged by offering applicant accommodation many miles away from their family or wider support networks.

The Head of Housing stated the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Confirmed that each applicant would have a needs assessment which would generate a personal housing plan.
- ii. Housing demand would outstrip the supply and those not in priority need would be directed to other options.

- iii. The new approach would see many more people gaining access to advice and support.
- iv. Applicants could request a review at any stage of the process and internal review could be arranged very quickly.

The Executive Councillor for Housing confirmed that the policy changes had not been undertaken lightly.

The Committee resolved by 5 votes to 3 to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

18/28/HSC Grant Award - Wintercomfort

This item was Chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

- i. Wintercomfort is a registered charity in Cambridge, providing a range of services to people who were homeless, formerly homeless or threatened with homelessness. The service has three constituent parts; welfare services, which are primarily designed for those sleeping rough in the city, a learning and development service and the management of two social enterprises, which aim to employ those using Wintercomfort's services.
- ii. The service is strategically important to both the City and County Councils and both authorities provide grant funding to Wintercomfort to deliver the welfare and learning and development services element of the operation. The current grant funding agreement is due to expire on 30th September 2018 and Members were, therefore, asked to consider proposals, contained within the Officer's report, on future grant funding arrangements.
- iii. A wider report on the anticipated impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act (later enacted in April 2018) went to committee in September 2017 and included recommendations on the Homelessness Prevention Grant Programme. This included a commitment to grant fund Wintercomfort until 31.3.2019. However, this runs beyond the current grant period and the Council now wants to bring both the grant period and awards process for this grant in line with financial years.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Agreed, subject to any changes that may be made as part of the budget setting process and the formal adoption of the 2019/20 budget by Council, to award a new grant agreement to Wintercomfort, initially spanning a two and a half year period from 1st October 2018 to 31st March 2021.
- ii. Delegated authority for the Head of Housing to determine, in consultation with Legal Services, whether to enter into a joint grant agreement with the County Council to fund the Wintercomfort service or whether to enter into separate agreements.
- iii. Agreed the principle that from 2021/22 grant applications from Wintercomfort will not be considered in isolation, but will align with the Homelessness Prevention Fund Grant application process.

Reason for the Decision

In forming the recommendations for this committee to consider, officers had taken into account procurement, financial and legal advice, along with the views expressed by officers at the County Council, who are considering its own grant commitment concurrently.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Head of Housing.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Discussion of points to be raised in the response to the extent to which Wintercomfort should be considered a special case.
- ii. Noted that the County Council provided very little funding for this sort of provision.

The Strategic Director (Suzanne Hemingway) stated that there was a need to be open and transparent. The grants process was currently under review and the current aim was to give all services involved sufficient time to plan ahead and to participate in the process.

The Executive Councillor confirmed that Wintercomfort had been consulted about the changes.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

18/29/HSC City Centre Rough Sleeping

This item was Chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Public Speaker

Chris Jenkins, Trustee of Hope Cambridge (Cambridge Churches Homeless Project) addressed the committee and made the following comments:

- i. Hope Cambridge works with a number of partners on various projects.
- ii. Aims were to help people off the streets.
- iii. Housing solutions need to be supported with mentoring.
- iv. This was a matter for the wider community and Cambridge needs to come together to find solutions.
- v. People want to help and are ready to engage.
- vi. Urged the Committee to reconsider the charter proposal.

Matter for Decision

- i. In early 2018, Councillor Bick and County Councillor Harrison, carried out an investigation into rough sleeping, and its impact on Cambridge. They produced a report with recommendations for the City Council, County Council, Police and other partners.
- ii. Cllr Bick had requested that the Housing Scrutiny Committee consider his report.
- iii. The covering report provided an officer response to the recommendations.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the report, and endorse the work already being carried out by the Homelessness team and our partners in delivering services to rough sleepers;
- ii. Request that officers actively engage in the County Council review of supported accommodation, to seek to ensure an outcome that supports vulnerable people and prevents rough sleeping.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

Councillor Bick and County Councillor Harrison introduced their report and responded to question from the Committee as follows:

- i. No direct feedback had been sought from other Market Ward Councillors. It was not known whether they were supportive of the approach suggested.
- ii. Stated that views on the installation of needle disposal bins in the public realm were mixed. Some felt they attracted users to already problematic areas.
- iii. A Charter would generate greater publicity for the framework and the mission statement.
- iv. The Charter would be a flexible tool to galvanise support.
- v. A Housing first approach was desirable.
- vi. Accommodation needs to be available at benefit levels.
- vii. Comments from the County Council had been included in the report.
- viii. The small reduction in street sleeping was welcomed but this needed to be maintained.

The Committee received a report in response to the proposals from the Head of Housing and the Strategic Director (SH).

The Strategic Director (SH) stated that a Charter would be expensive and would divert resources from direct provision to public engagement. Cambridge was attractive to people from a wider geographical area and there were a high proportion of generous young people who would give to street beggars.

The Committee expressed concerns that Universal Credit would increase homelessness.

The Executive Councillor for Housing, Councillor Price, welcomed the report for highlighting an important issue. A lot of work was already being done but additional suggestions were always welcomed.

Councillor Cantrill proposed the following additional recommendation to the Officer's report:

Request that officers bring specific proposals to the October Housing Scrutiny Committee, for the preparation of a Cambridge Charter for Rough Sleeping and Street Life issues.

The amendment was lost by 5 votes to 3.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

18/30/HSC Extension of Mandatory Licensing for Houses in Multiple Occupation

This item was Chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The Executive Councillor was asked to approve an increase to the houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) licence fee as outlined in Appendix A of the Officer's report and to approve additional staffing resources.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Agreed the increase to the HMO licence fee as outlined in Appendix A of the Officer's report.
- ii. Agree to the recruitment of additional staffing resources as detailed, namely
 - a. Two Enforcement Officers
 - b. One Licensing Support Officer

Reason for the Decision

In order to comply with additional requirements that extension of Mandatory Licensing would impose it had been necessary to review the current licence fee to ensure that it reflects the actual cost of licensing and associated up to date/current officer costs.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Residential Team Manager, Environmental Health.

The Residential Team Manager, Environmental Health stated the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. A risk based inspection programme would be developed. Properties of known landlords, with a good record, would be fast-tracked for licensing without an initial inspection.

- ii. The length of the License issues could vary and might be shorter where concerns had been raised.

The Tenant and Leaseholder representatives welcomed the report.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

18/31/HSC Adoption of a Private Rented Sector Housing Standards

This item was Chaired by Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

Approved the adoption of the Cambridge City Council Private Rented Sector Housing Standard was needed so that property professionals operating within Cambridge City are provided with clear and relevant information in order to assist them to comply with relevant legislation and accepted guidance standards and thus provide safe and suitable accommodation.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the adoption of the Cambridge City Council Private Rented Sector Housing Standard, appendix a of the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

It was acknowledged that current private rented standards and guidance were outdated and that responsible landlords / property managers do not always understand which apply to the rental accommodation that they are responsible for. This leads to a reliance on Council Enforcement Officers from within the Residential Team, Environmental Health Department Environmental Services to explain standards requirements upon receipt of service requests from them seeking compliance.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Residential Team Manager, Environmental Health.

The Residential Team Manager, Environmental Health stated the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The Standards under consideration would not include accessibility. However, this was covered by other legislation.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm

CHAIR

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