

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 14 November 2019 at 18:30

PRESENT:

Councillor Grant (in the chair); Councillors Cameron, Candon, Galer, Hacon, D Hammond, Martin, Smith-Clare, Talbot, Wainwright, Walker & Williamson.

Councillor P Hammond attended as a substitute for Councillor Flaxman-Taylor.

Mrs N Turner (Director of Housing), Mrs J Beck (Head of Property & Asset Management), Mr J Wilson (Head of Environmental Services), Mrs V George (Independent Living Service Manager), Mr I Talbot (Adaptations & Improvements Team Manager), Mrs R Frosdick (Executive Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Flaxman-Taylor and Neil Shaw.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Hammond and Councillor P Hammond declared a personal interest in item 10 as they are landlords or property in that are. However in line with the Councils constitution, were allowed to speak and vote on the matter.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17th October 2019 were confirmed.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Williamson asked for clarification on who the Neighbourhoods that Work team report to currently. It was confirmed that the team report to Neil Shaw, but confirmation is required as to what will happen when Neil leaves the authority in December.

Councillor Talbot queried whether the CCG have responded further with any information on the Great Yarmouth out of hours provision.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

6 TEMPORARY ACCOMODATION STRATEGY

The Committee received and considered the report from the Service Unit Manager (Housing Options) and a number of questions were received.

Members requested a list of the Council's temporary accommodation, a breakdown of accommodation type and how many people can be housed in each property type as the bedroom allocation differs. The Housing Director will circulate this information.

A Member queried the alternatives for temporary accommodation if the Council want to move away from using its own housing stock and bed & breakfasts. The Housing Director advised that the following would need to be addressed:-

- preventing homelessness duty
- increasing our supply of affordable housing
- accessing good quality private rented accommodation
- helping people so as not to lose their accommodation in the first place.

RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan.

7 HOUSING ADAPTATIONS SERVICE REVIEW

The Committee received and considered the report from the Independent Living Service Manager.

The primary purpose of this report is to set out the rationale for increasing the resource to deliver the adaptation service, in addition the report also highlights recent modifications to the Adaptations Policy for Council Tenants.

Councillor Talbot raised some concern with regards to mobility scooters being stored and charged within council flats.

RESOLVED:

The Committee resolved:-

- To agree an increase in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue budget by £84,500 p.a. to enable the recruitment of one full time Technical Officer and one full time Occupational Therapist on fixed term contracts for 2 years, subject to a report on this matter being presented to the committee in 18 months time for review.
- To an increase in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital adaptations budget of £200,000 per annum for 2020/21 and 2021/22
- To agree to minor modifications to the current Adaptations Policy for Council Tenants as set out in section 7 of this report

8 HRA DEBT CAP REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report from the Finance Director and Housing Director.

Councils borrow within their HRA's in order to invest in the housing stock. This includes programmes such as building more homes to provide further income, or even to refurbish or regenerate existing homes. However, due to each council being limited to how much they could borrow, the debt cap greatly restricted local authorities' ability to invest in building much needed new homes.

In order to help solve the 'housing crisis', the government announced it would scrap the debt cap limitations on how much councils can borrow against their

HRA Assets. The HRA debt cap was removed with immediate effect and the new determination came into force on the 30th October 2018.

Authorities are now able to borrow above their original debt cap, to meet their spending requirements and take advantage of interest rates while they remain low.

Councillor Williamson proposed an addition to the recommendations as follows:-

To consider building high quality eco-friendly properties for longevity and health benefits.

The Director of Housing suggests the recommendation should read as follows:

The Council's new build programme is delivered to be as energy efficient as possible and built to an agreed standard which is designed to reduce ongoing repair and maintenance costs, where this is both viable and appropriate.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agree that:

- Subject to normal budget approval processes, the repairs and maintenance budget is reduced by £500,000 in 2020/21 and the subsequent two years.
- The released revenue funding is used to support borrowing to fund a programme of acquisition or development of new Council homes within the HRA as set out in the report.
- A review of further opportunities to fund new affordable housing is undertaken following the completion of the next stock condition survey in 2022.
- Opportunities for sites are identified and a programme of delivery including numbers and time frames is developed and reported back to Members as set out in the report.
- The Council's new build programme is delivered to be as energy efficient as possible and built to an agreed standard which is designed to reduce ongoing repair and maintenance costs, where this is both viable and appropriate.

9 BOROUGH PROFILE DATA

The committee received a presentation by the Housing Director.

Councillor Williamson has requested further social economic health data, down to ward level be brought back to the next meeting. Councillor Smith-Clare agreed that this information would be beneficial to try and pinpoint the correlation between low income families and achievement.

RESOLVED:

That the committee noted the presentation and requested further data be brought to the December meeting.

10 SELECTIVE LICENSING

The committee received and considered the report by the Head of Environmental Health and Senior Housing Licensing Officer.

The Head of Environmental Health advised that good feedback is being received on the Selective Licensing Scheme and encouraged representation from the ward councillors and members of this committee to attend the quarterly Nelson Ward Private Rented Sector Group meetings, which are being scheduled.

Councillor Talbot asked whether this scheme would be rolled out to other wards in the borough. The Head of Environmental Health advised that the first annual update would be made to the committee in early 2020 where this could be explored further.

RESOLVED:

That the committee noted the contents of the update report ahead of future updates.

Agreed the Members representing the Nelson Ward and The Housing & Neighbourhood Committee may attend a quarterly Nelson Ward Private Rented Sector Group.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reported that there was no other business being of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

12 GYN BOARD MINUTES (Confidential Minute on this Item)

The meeting ended at: 20:00