



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 23 September 2021 at 18:30

PRESENT:-

Councillor Grant (in the Chair); Councillors Candon, Cameron, Flaxman-Taylor, D Hammomd, Jeal, Martin, Price, Talbot, Smith-Clare, Wainwright & Williamson.

Councillor Wells attended as a substitute for Councillor Galer.

Mrs P Boyce (Strategic Director), Mrs K Blakemore (Strategic Director), Mrs N Turner (Housing Director) & Mrs C Webb (Executive Services Officer).

Mr B James, Mr S Bentley & Mr A Oakley (Active Norfolk).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Galer.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jeal declared a Pecuniary interest in item no 9, Community Grants 2020-21 & update on Community Investment Fund 2021-22, as he was an employee of Firstmove Furnishaid and reported that he would take no part in the determination of this item.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021 were confirmed.

4 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the Forward Plan.

5 ACTIVE NORFOLK STRATEGY UPDATE

The Strategic Director introduced Ben James, Samuel Bentley & Andy Oakley from Active Norfolk to the Committee.

Ben Jones introduced a Youtube video titled Getting Norfolk Moving and then gave a presentation which covered the following areas:-

- Our Vision
- Our Mission
- Our Approach
- Insight into Norfolk
- Physical Health & Well-being
- Active Environments
- Strengthening Communities
- Children & Young People
- How We'll Work
- Getting Local
- Measuring Success.

Councillor Candon asked if the review of children's play areas was being undertaken which had been requested by the Environment Committee. The Strategic Director reported that an open spaces review was underway and a report would be taken to the Environment Committee later this year.

Councillor Jeal reported that officers had undertaken sterling work in the repair of the play equipment and floor surface at St.Georges Playground.

Councillor Smith-Clare asked how Active Norfolk intended to map the individual journeys/outcomes of residents and whether community wide engagement would be carried out. Ben Jones reported that their approach was flexible and would

develop/evolve as engagement was carried out.

Councillor Jeal asked how Active Norfolk planned help residents like himself who preferred driving a car rather than being active and walking or cycling to get about the town. Ben James reported that it was getting the approach right to give residents the confidence and feel safe to exercise to combat long term health conditions or inactivity and they would work in partnership with health care providers to offer a holistic approach.

The Chairman thanked Ben, Samuel & Andy for their informative video & presentation.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the update.

6 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report from the Strategic Director.

The Strategic Director reported that the Council currently worked in partnership with Active Norfolk to deliver its Active GY Framework and wider sports development through the appointment of a jointly funded Physical Activity Development Officer since October 2020.

As part of this arrangement, a collaboration agreement had been signed up to by both parties, which required twice yearly review meetings. This report provided the Committee with an update following the first review meeting which was held on 25 May 2021.

The following highlights of the subsequent outcomes, as a result of this partnership working and dedicated resource included:

- Reininvigorated Active GY Stakeholder Group,
- Active GY Framework annual action plan with actions being assigned and delivered by all partners who attend the GY Stakeholder Group; and
- The highest proportion of the Tackling Inequalities Fund monies awarded to Active Norfolk being spent in Great Yarmouth (£48K of the £80K funding allocation for Norfolk).

Andy Oakley reported that funding from the Norfolk wide pot for Phase 2 of the Tackling Inequalities Fund of £56k had been secured for Great Yarmouth, from a pot of £160k for the County, which equated to the town receiving 35% of the funding and that additional funding of £61k had been secured, taking the total funding secured for Great Yarmouth to £117k. The Strategic Director reported that this demonstrated the benefit of Andy working in our community to secure additional funding streams and achieve wider outcomes.

Councillor Williamson asked for clarification as to who sat on the Great Yarmouth Stakeholder Group referred to in the report. The Strategic Director reported that this group consisted of a diverse range of partners from across many different sectors from the CCG to Dial and that Councillor Flaxman-Taylor attended and represented the Council.

Councillor Williamson noted that the strategy was a good narrative but that he had

concerns regarding its delivery. Councillor Williamson asked if the Academy schools had been directly consulted/engaged as it was imperative that the schools became part of the delivery process as they had the facilities to offer the local residents, such as access to 3G pitches. Andy Oakley reported that schools were being engaged with by the County Schools Games Officers who were mapping and understanding what they could offer to the community. Councillor Williamson informed Andy that East Norfolk Sixth Form College had not yet been approached.

Councillor Williamson asked if Active Norfolk would be expecting qualitative or quantitative outcomes. Ben James responded that it was hoped to have a mixture of both. The Strategic Director reported that the Action Plan contained outcomes to be met each year and the data would be reviewed on a yearly basis and reported to this Committee, together with the planned outcomes to be included in next years Action Plan.

Councillor Williamson reported for accuracy purposes of the report, that Great Yarmouth did not have CIL in this area in regard planning.

Councillor Candon welcomed the report and was pleased to see the proactive steps being taken to improve the health and well-being of the residents of the Borough. Councillor Candon asked for clarification regarding the Physical Activity Development Officer post. The Strategic Director reported that Andy Oakley was the Council's Physical Activity Development Officer.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the report.

7 2021-22 PERIOD 4 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

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

The Housing Director reported that this report provided an update on the 2021/22 HRA budget. In reviewing the budget, the actual expenditure and income to the end of period 4 had been compared to the profiled budgets for the same period. Key variations were identified and explained within Appendix 1, HRA Income and Expenditure 2021/22 and Appendix 2, HRA Capital programme expenditure.

The Housing Director reported that the Revenue Account currently had a revised 2021/22 forecast deficit of £2.805m, from an originally budgeted forecast deficit of £2.954m, a reduction of £149k. Capital programme spend was currently on track and there had been fewer Right to Buys than the budget originally assumed.

The Housing Director reported that the detail within the report and appendices provided commentary on the variances to date, together with the full year position.

Councillor Price was concerns that the budget forecast might not stack up due to the increase in costs of building materials, kitchens and bathroom fixtures which had increased by approximately 30%. The Housing Director reported that the capital

programme was monitored on a regular basis and the Property Team were looking closely at the cost of build and component prices and this would be reflected in the report provided to the Committee for period 6.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee consider and note the 2021/22 Housing Revenue and capital Budget monitoring position, as at the end of period 4.

8 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ADAPTATION AND IMPROVEMENT POLICY

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

The Housing Director reported that the revised policy presented to Members, updated the existing Private Sector Adaptation and Improvement Policy which was revised in July 2019, to reflect best practice and current thinking on the delivery of the Disabled facility Grant (DFG) and discretionary assistance. Section 2 of the report, at page 37 of the agenda pack, set out the key amendments made to the policy, which included updating service standards and a number of changes to grants and loans such as:-

- Using DFG monies to fund the first £5,000 of an applicant's financial contribution to remove a barrier to some applicants pursuing their DFG application and being able to benefit from the adaptations they required.
- Introducing a new discretionary DFG top-up grant of £20,000 where they have been awarded a DFG for which the costs exceeded the current limit of £30,000. This reflected the increasing complexity of some DFG applications where more than one adaptation was required. This would be secured through a charge on the property allowing full recovery of the discretionary grant on transfer of the property.
- Introducing a new Discretionary Top-Up grant for heating and energy efficiency measures where recipients were receiving other government/energy industry funded works but there was a shortfall of funding to meet the costs of the works.

The Housing Director reported that the report provided an update on current DFG service delivery, which was still experiencing low levels of DFG completion due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

Councillor Williamson asked if the Council had filled the two vacant Technical Officer posts. The Housing Director that both posts had now been recruited to.

Councillor Martin referred to the Night Owl Service provided as part of the Be at Home Alarms as detailed on page 55 of the agenda, as the service was struggling to meet the demand and this key area needed to be urgently addressed, as it allowed people to stay in their homes and not have to go into care or take up valuable hospital beds. Councillor Martin asked if the call volume number information was shared with County. Councillor Martin had heard of instances where it had taken an ambulance four hours to arrive after calling the emergency services which was inexcusable and she asked whether the Council could fund these alarms for tenants on a low income as it could help to save lives. Councillor Martin asked if a discretionary fund for these alarms could be set up.

Councillor Martin reported that the alarms cost £17.58 a month, which did not appear to be a great deal of money, but was hard to find for someone on a fixed, low income. **The Housing Director agreed to investigate whether we shared information with County on the number of calls made to the Night Owl Service and would look in to whether the Be at Home alarms could be provided for a period of time, free of charge, through the Better Care Fund.**

Councillor Jeal reported that he supported Councillor Martin's request, as he had heard stories of elderly people falling in their homes and having to wait hours and hours to be rescued which was not acceptable.

The Housing Director reminded the Committee that the Night Owl Service was provided by County but that the Council was in regular contact with them and raised concerns over the level of service provision in these challenging times.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approve the Private Sector Adaptation & Improvement Policy.

9 COMMUNITY GRANTS 2020-21 AND UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND 2021-22

The Committee received and considered the report from the Strategic Director and Neighbourhood Manager.

The Strategic Director reported the salient areas of the report to the Committee which provided Members with an update on both the community grants awarded in 2020/21, which due to the pandemic, Members agreed to extend to 30 August 2021, and a six month update on the work of the Norfolk Community Foundation, as fund manager for the newly established Great Yarmouth Community Investment Fund, which Members approved on 4 March 2021.

In addition, the report also summarised the £141,427 of commissioned Community Champions' Programme VCSE outreach services that were now in place. Members would recall Great Yarmouth Borough Council was awarded £465,000 grant funding for 2021/22 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to establish a Community Champions' Programme comprising of three workstreams. This had enabled a new outreach programme to be commissioned by the Council which was being delivered by four Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations. The primary purpose being to ensure residents had access to trusted sources of health information and guidance for themselves and their contacts relating to the COVID-19, local vaccination services and the broader support offered by Norfolk County Council, the Borough Council, Norfolk Public Health, the Norfolk & Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group and the Borough's two Primary Care Networks.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Director for her comprehensive report.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee:-

(i) Note the outcome and impact of the Council's Community Grants provided to VCSEs up to 30 August 2021,

(ii) Note the progress on the Community Champions' outreach programme; and

(iii) Receive and note the update on the Great Yarmouth Community Investment Fund administered by the Norfolk Community Foundation and the Foundation's plan to grow this independent fund.

10 ROUGH SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME BID - HOUSING FIRST SCHEME

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

The Housing Director reported that the Covid pandemic highlighted the scale of rough sleeping and the number of individuals in insecure housing at risk of rough sleeping across the Borough. The Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan 2020 produced in response and adopted by Full Council in July 2020, identified the need for a clear pathway approach which ensured that rough sleeper's accommodation and support needs were assessed to ensure they could access accommodation which met their needs. In considering this pathway approach, it had become clear that there was a gap in the existing provision for rough sleepers with high or complex needs within existing or planned provision.

The Housing Director reported that to meet this need, a new Housing First model scheme had been developed to provide five self-contained properties where rough sleepers would be able to be accommodated for up to two years. These properties would be bought and repaired to ensure that the homes for the scheme met the required standard. Integral to the scheme, was the provision of a personalised, flexible support offer, reflecting the high level of support needed, and there would be one full-time post to support the five individuals who would be housed through the scheme. The Council had submitted a bid to the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme for both capital and revenue funding to deliver the scheme with a decision expected by the end of September/beginning of October 2021.

Councillor Wainwright reported that he welcomed this policy and asked for clarification as to how many people had been identified as being homeless in the Borough at the present time. The Housing Director reported that the last figure she had received, as of Monday this week, there were 14 homeless people in the Borough.

Councillor Wainwright reported that he thought that the Council had identified a building for this scheme subject to a condition survey. The Housing Director reported that the building which Councillor Wainwright was referring to related to the transitional housing scheme, which was a different proposal to this scheme, and was

still progressing.

Councillor Wainwright asked if the five houses would be close together or spread throughout the Borough as sometimes, proposals such as this, could cause tensions within a community. The Housing Director reported that they would ideally be sited in Great Yarmouth, Gorleston or a larger village, which had services to offer and would be effectively managed by 1 full-time dedicated officer.

The Chairman reported that the funding allocated allowed for a purchase price of £130k per property which he thought could be inadequate. The Housing Director reported that the confidential appendix to the report provided a breakdown of costs.

Councillor Jeal requested that any housing provided did not incur a weekly rent over the government housing allowance. The Housing Director reported that affordability was the key and the the Universal Credit housing element would be uppermost when an offer was made to ensure that it was affordable for the tenant in the long term.

Councillor Talbot asked if the Council was considering the introduction of "wet houses" as addiction was not a choice, but an illness, and if addicts had a safe home environment and were able to get off of the streets they would have a much better chance of becoming clean and a functioning member of society again. The Housing Director reported that careful consideration would be required as how the Council could best address this issue.

Councillor Martin thanked the Housing Director and her team for all their support in getting this much needed scheme up and running which had been much needed for a very long time.

RESOLVED:-

That the Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee recommend to Full Council:-

1. Approve the purchase and renovation of five properties to be used to meet the needs of rough sleepers with high support needs within the parameters of the project as set out in this report and the Confidential Appendix,
2. Approve, subject to a successful application for grant funding, the expenditure and the borrowing set out in the report at paragraph 3.1. i.e. the purchase, repair and renovation and furnishing of the properties,
3. Delegate decisions in relation to the purchase of the properties and the completion of the required renovation works to the Head of Property and Asset Management and the Section 151 Officer in accordance with the Property Acquisitions and Disposals Policy,
4. Approve the procurement of a third-party support provider to deliver the support and manage the five homes; and
5. Accept the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme grant funding and conditions.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

13 CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX - ROUGH SLEEPING ACCOMODATION PROGRAMME BID - HOUSING FIRST SCHEME

(Confidential Minute on this Item)

The meeting ended at: 20:30