

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 27 October 2016 at 18:30

PRESENT:

Councillor Carpenter (in the Chair); Councillors Borg, Flaxman-Taylor, Grant, K Grey, Hacon, Rodwell, Walch & Waters-Bunn.

Councillor Jeal attended as a substitute for Councillor Robinson-Payne.

Councillor Bensly attended as a substitute for Councillor Mavroudis.

Councillor Lawn attended as a substitute for Councillor M Coleman.

Councillor Davis attended as a substitute for Councillor Williamson.

Mr T Chaplin (Group Manager Housing Services), Mr R Gregory (Group Manager Neighbourhoods & Communities) & Mrs C Webb (Member Services Officer).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Coleman, Mavroudis, Robinson-Payne & Williamson.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declaration of interest declared at the meeting.

3 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

The Committee moved the following resolution:-

"That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act."

4 MINUTES

The minutes and the confidential minute of the meeting held on 15 September 2016 were confirmed.

5 MATTERS ARISING

(i) With regard to minute number 10, Neighbourhoods That Work - Study Visit 2016; the Group Manager Neighbourhoods & Communities reported that the event had been very successful with over 100 attendees. The National Lottery was keen that the format was shared with other coastal towns and were, in effect, using Great Yarmouth as a test bed. The Group Manager Neighbourhoods & Communities reported that a 12 month outcomes data report would be presented to the Committee at the next meeting.

(ii) With regard to minute number 13, Sport, Play & Leisure Strategy, the Group Manager Neighbourhoods & Communities reported that he would request the Member Services officer to e-mail copies of the document to the Committee.

(iii) With regard to confidential minute number 15, the Committee moved the Exclusion of Public Resolution before discussing the item. Councillor Walch requested that the minute be updated to include the following:-
A member requested that the Yarmouth Area Committee and Ward Councillors be given the opportunity to discuss the proposals regarding the Wellesley Recreation Ground prior to any decision being made by this Committee.

6 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee might wish to rearrange the items for decision allotted for the next meeting as it would result in a heavy

agenda. Members suggested that item 5, Housing Strategy - Demand/PRS be deferred to the meeting scheduled for 2 March 2017.

The Chairman reported that she had attended a useful presentation by Norfolk Police in the Supper Room, Town Hall last Thursday, 20 October 2016 and asked whether the Committee would like to receive the same presentation. The Committee agreed that the presentation would be useful and asked that it be added to the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED:

(i) That item number 5 on the Forward Plan, Housing Strategy - Demand/PRS, be deferred to the meeting scheduled for 2 March 2017.

(ii) That Norfolk Police be invited to give a presentation to the Committee and be added to the Forward Plan.

7 HOUSING & NEIGHBOURHOODS PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2016/17

The Committee received and considered the report from the Group Manager Housing Services which provided performance data from the Housing & Neighbourhoods Directorate for Quarter 2, of 2016/17.

With regard to PI HN08, Number of Complaints of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) received, the Chairman reported that the figures were unacceptably high. The Chairman requested that the figures be broken down further to identify the number of each type of ASB before being reported to the Committee. The Group Manager Housing Services reported that the figures were provided by Environmental Health and that he would approach the Group Manager Environmental Services to see if a further breakdown of data was achievable.

Councillor Jeal reported his concerns regarding the threat of eviction for tenants who were in receipt of the new Universal Credit benefit. He asked for an assurance from the Group Manager Housing Services, that tenants in receipt of Universal Credit, would not be evicted from their homes by the Council.

The Group Manager Housing Services reported that he was unable to give such a reassurance but that Community Housing would exhaust every avenue before it applied to the Magistrates Court for an eviction notice.

Councillor Jeal reported that tenants in receipt of Universal Credit were used to their rent being paid directly to the Council and were not used to budgeting and that it would take time for them to familiarise themselves with the new system. It was imperative that the Council did not evict our tenants for non-payment of rent, especially in light of the fact, that the Council wrote off large amounts of debt each year for issues such as non-payment of rates.

Councillor Jeal proposed that the Committee should recommend that eviction

orders be suspended and that in future, eviction notices could only be issued if it was sanctioned by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Councillor K Grey reported that it was ludicrous that the Government had chosen Great Yarmouth to pilot Universal Credit. Councillor Grant reported that he assumed that no court would sanction eviction due to non-receipt of Universal Credit.

The Group Manager Housing Services reported that the procedure to apply for eviction of a tenant through the Courts followed strict guidelines and that each eviction application had been judged on a case by case nature and been dealt with professionally at all stages by the Rents Team. The Council had a fair rents policy but had to be tough at the same time with early enforcement measures being undertaken and eviction as the ultimate sanction.

Councillor Walch proposed that the Chairman and one other Councillor from the Committee, but not a Ward Councillor, should be involved in the eviction process.

The Committee were in agreement that the Chairman and one other Councillor from the Committee, in consultation with the Group Manager Housing Services, should be involved in any potential eviction on a case by case nature. The Group Manager Housing Services reported that in the last year, the Council had applied for 15 eviction notices, 11 due to rent arrears and 4 due to non-rent arrears and he proposed that he should report the eviction data on a quarterly basis.

Councillor Jeal reported that he was not questioning the ability of officers to undertake decisions on individual eviction cases.

Councillor K Grey reported that she was concerned regarding the net cost of the Council providing bed and breakfast accommodation. The Group Manager Housing Services reported that this figure was likely to rise in the future. Councillor Jeal reported that if the person(s) did not reimburse the Council for providing temporary accommodation, they would not qualify for our Housing Allocation Scheme.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Chairman and one other member of the Committee (who was not a Ward Councillor), in consultation with the Group Manager Housing Services, be involved in the eviction process, on a case by case basis.
- (ii) That the Committee note the report.

8 CAR ENTHUSIASTS PROGRESS REPORT

The Group Manager Neighbourhoods & Communities gave an update on the proposed multi-agency response to the issue of car and motorbike enthusiasts

causing anti-social behaviour along Great Yarmouth.

The Group Manager Neighbourhoods & Communities reported that nplaw had advised that it would not be possible to extend the PSPO to encompass Jellicoe Road/Freemantle Road and the surrounding area and that a separate PSPO would have to be applied for these areas.

The Chairman asked whether nplaw had checked the wording of the proposed PSPO to ensure that it was watertight and could not be challenged legally and that the local Magistrates Court had been informed of its existence.

RESOLVED:

(i) That that Committee note the results of the consultation in relation to the Personal Space Protection Order (PSPO); and

(ii) That the Committee receive a further report to approve the creation of the PSPO in conjunction with the work currently being undertaken by the Enforcement Board.

9 WELLESLEY RECREATION GROUND

The Group Manager Neighbourhoods and Communities reported recent reports of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage at the Wellesley Recreation Ground which included immediate prevention work and longer term development options.

Councillor Walch reported that he supported the need for a different operating model for the Wellesley, perhaps the formation of a Trust, but he requested that the Council should not gift this land, as it belonged to the residents of the Borough. Councillor Walch reported that he did not think the Council was receiving value for money from GYB Services for the maintenance of the Wellesley at an annual cost of £50k.

Councillor Walch requested that the Ward Councillors for Central and Northgate wards should be invited to attend any working group which was set up to consider the future of the Wellesley.

The Chairman reported that she had recently visited the Wellesley and had witnessed several incidents of anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Waters-Bunn reported that since the Police had been exercising Police Dogs in the Wellesley and carrying out additional visits to the area that anti-social behaviour incidents had dropped dramatically in the last two weeks.

Councillor Jeal reported that there were three listed buildings in the Wellesley, the stand, the pavilion and the Ticket Office which would require a significant amount of revenue to bring up to standard and maintain.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the contents of the report and the recommended next steps.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Councillor Water-Bunn asked whether E qualities Training could be provided for Members. The Group Manager Neighbourhoods and Communities agreed to look into this matter and report back.

The meeting ended at: 19:50