



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 10 June 2021 at 18:30

PRESENT:

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

Mrs P Boyce (Strategic Director), Mrs N Turner (Housing Director), Mrs V George (Independent Living Service Manager), Ms S Bolan (Enabling & Empty Homes Officer), Ms Claire Wilkins (Housing Delivery Manager), Ms C Spooner (Housing Strategy Policy & Performance Officer), Mr T Chaplin (Housing Transformation Manager), Ms S Robinson (Early Help Hub Manager), Mr D Wilson (Neighbourhood Manager), Mrs S Wintle (Corporate Services Manager) & Ms R Frosdick (Executive Services Officer).

Ms Judy Dow (Head of Philanthropy, Norfolk Community Foundation)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carrie Talbot.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Grant declared a pecuniary interest in item 7 - Community Housing Fund due to being a member of 3 Community Land Trusts in the Borough.

Councillor Martin declared a pecuniary interest in item 7 - Community Housing Fund due to being a Trustee on a Community Land Trust in the Borough.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 4th March 2021 were confirmed.

With regard to item 7 (page 9), Councillor Williamson advised that up-to-date data could be sourced from the Cambridge Public Health Observatory and not the Cambridge Health Authority.

4 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee receive and note the Forward Plan.

8 COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS - COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECT

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

Judy Dow from the Norfolk Community Foundation (NCF) was in attendance to answer questions from the committee on the choice of operators.

In January 2021, the Council was successfully applied for a grant to deliver the Community Champions Programme. This was made available by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), working jointly with National Health Services (NHS) England. One strand of the Community Champion project is to support the establishment of a sustainable and accessible VCSE-operated food offer, via a community supermarket. One strand of the project is to support the establishment of a sustainable and accessible VCSE-operated food offer, via a community supermarket.

There is only one other of these projects in Norfolk based in Thetford, so their business model has been utilised. Establishing these successful community stores will contribute to all four Locality Strategy priorities:

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Low Educational Attainment, Skills and Aspirations
3. Vulnerability and Exploitation and
4. Loneliness, Isolation and Social Exclusion

The Norfolk Community Foundation (NCF) was identified as a key strategic partner to help the Council establish this project. As a part of the project scoping Phase 1, NCF has compiled an Interim Options Report. The findings of the report were based on NCF's investigative work to identify the most suitable and relevant community-based organisation to take the lead on the Community Supermarket project. After considering all key features, NCF is recommending that the Council invites the Shrublands Youth and Adult Centre Charitable Trust (SYACCT) and The Salvation Army Great Yarmouth Corps (TSAGYC) to work with the NCF and the Council, to prepare business plans and submit grant applications to set-up community food stores.

As part of the £465,000 MHCLG grant awarded, £120,000 has been allowed for the community food project across the borough to ideally establish two stores. It is anticipated that further external funders/supporters will come onboard making the project self sustainable going forward. All funding for this project needs to be spent by the 30th September but projects can continue beyond this date.

There is only one other project such as this in Norfolk which is based in Thetford

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. Noted the research and stakeholder engagement undertaken by the Norfolk Community Foundation (NCF) in partnership with the Borough Council, and statutory partners including representatives from the CCG and Primary Care Networks.
2. Supports the recommendation that Shrublands Youth and Adult Centre Charitable Trust (SYACCT) and The Salvation Army Great Yarmouth Corps (TSAGYC) are the most suitable Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) operators for the proposed Community Food Stores located on the Shrublands site in Gorleston and in Great Yarmouth respectively.
3. Invites the SYACCT and TSAGYC to submit grant applications to the Council accompanied by sustainable business plans developed in association with the NCF, as preferred lead VCSE organisations to establish sustainable VCSE-operated community- based food stores.
4. Delegated authority to the Strategic Director to award grants, subject to

satisfactory proposals from the applicants, to run the two food stores on a community supermarket operating model, provided also that necessary permissions, consents and operational business plans are in place.

Councillor Jeal requested it be noted that he abstained from voting.

5 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report from the Housing Strategy Policy & Performance Officer

The Housing Strategy Policy & Performance Officer gave an update overview of the delivery of the 2018-2023 Housing Strategy. It was noted that the pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges, however progress has continued to be made against the measures and the Housing Strategy priorities and has acted as a catalyst for new initiatives and approaches in reducing rough sleeping and tackling homelessness.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the progress to date and request a further update report in 12 months time.

6 COUNCIL ADAPTATION POLICY

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

The Housing Director gave an overview of the current policy and the revisions they would like to see made.

Councillor Williamson, regarding 11.2 of the policy, asked whether we had received any Right to Buy applications on adapted properties in the past 5 years. The Housing Director confirmed that we had only one in the past 18 months where a significant amount had been spent on the property, so this request was declined.

Councillor Martin requested an update on the recruitment of a Technical Officer and Occupational Therapist which had been discussed at a previous meeting. The Independent Living Service Manager confirmed that we recruited a Technical Officer in September 2020 and a Housing Occupational Therapist in December 2020 and that they are now working their way through the waiting list, although this has been impacted by COVID19. Early indications are showing that both posts are having a positive impact and a report will be provided later in the year as agreed.

Councillor Wainwright asked how many people are currently in accommodation which is unable to be adapted and are waiting to be moved. The Housing Director advised she didn't have this information to hand and will

bring this information back to the Committee.

Councillor Williamson explained that he has a number of tenants in his ward who require adaptations but live in housing association owned homes, and he struggles to get a response from the relevant person at the housing associations when concerns are raised. He would like to know how we work with housing associations to get a transfer when needed. The Housing Director advised it wouldn't be a direct transfer and the individuals would be assessed in accordance with our Housing Allocations Scheme and the appropriate priority is given. So if a property is deemed not able to be adapted to meet these needs we provide a level 4 priority which is high priority for a transfer. The difficulty we have is finding the right types of property to meet the needs, especially when there are particular needs such as large families needing large properties which can be adapted as this can be challenging within our existing housing stock. We work closely with the housing associations, look at interim adaptations which can be made whilst waiting for a transfer and possibly the use of equipment, but sometimes this isn't always possible. Having an in-house Occupational Therapist is helpful with these particular cases as she is able to help with assessments for this. Councillor Williamson asked whether ward councillors are able to send any such requests through to the housing team to help with communication between GYBC and the housing associations. The Housing Director confirmed that her team are happy to help with these.

The Chairman queried whether housing associations are able to apply for Disabled Facilities Grants or whether they have to provide their own funding. The Independent Living Service Manager confirmed that housing associations are allowed to apply for DFG, so the tenant applies. Housing associations in the past have contributed to the cost of adaptations but this doesn't happen so much now. There are some that will make a nominal payment but the majority will be met via the DFG.

Councillor Candon queried appendix 2 - parking, and whether this includes (if we have any), designated parking areas for first floor flats or houses within our portfolio as we sometimes have numbered bays relating to particular properties. The Housing Director confirmed that appendix 2 relates to acquiring a property that will be suitable for adaption or is already adapted to meet the needs to someone using a wheelchair, so we wouldn't be looking to acquire above ground properties due to issues surrounding access. In terms of our existing flat estates, there are a number of wheelchair parking spaces but they are not designated to a particular property.

Councillor Smith-Clare regarding point 10 - tenants installing their own adaptations, queried what number does that entail and what is the cost, if any, of adaptations that have taken place and need repairing after, and whether they are all minor adaptations? The Independent Living Service Manager isn't aware of any recent adaptations but she will check and bring this back to the next meeting.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approved the Adaptation Policy for Council Tenants.

7 COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND

The Committee received and considered the update report from the Enabling & Empty Homes Officer.

The Chair advised that it is likely that Hopton CLT will merge with Lothingland CLT as expansion isn't possible and due to being landlocked. Lothingland are currently looking at a potential site and engaging with the land agent. Flegg CLT has this week provisionally agreed a significant sized plot in one of the parishes and an application will be submitted soon, along with a further one in the northern parishes very soon.

Councillor Williamson queried how much technical/administrative support the CLT's get from the Council. The Chair advised it is dependant on the project. Technical support is provided through Locality and some assistance is sought from Strategic Planning and Property & Asset Management teams when needed.

Councillor Williamson queried how fast the response is a request for a loan is received. The Housing Director advised there hasn't been a formal request received yet so she cannot say for certain. Councillor Williamson asked if we have a timetable for these to be processed. The Housing Director confirmed that a timescale couldn't be given but consideration would be given to any time constraints on the land, also the application and information would need to be sufficient for it to be considered, but an answer would be given as soon as it possibly could.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the update report.

9 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020-21

The Committee received and considered the report from the Housing Transformation Manager.

It was noted that going forward the Asset Team is now back with GY Norse, so future performance is expected to improve in areas such as voids and repairs due to this.

In terms of housing rent collection HN01 - bearing in mind we have been through a pandemic, the performance in rent collections has been exceptional.

Councillor Williamson, in relation to HN05, queried what methodology we are

using to capture this information. The Housing Director advised that the methodology has not changed for this year and that GYN are still capturing this information via Survey Monkey. She will double check if they are still capturing feedback at the time of the repair is being done and a follow up survey as well. Councillor William advised that there has been concern for some time that the people collecting the information are those providing the service and that an independent service would be preferable. The Chair requested the Director of Housing contact the Head of Property & Asset Management regarding this issue and feedback at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the update report.

10 COUNCIL HOMES PROGRAMME

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

The Housing Director provided an update on the work undertaken since October 2020 to identify an initial tranche of potential sites that could be utilised to bring forward the delivery of Council Housing under the Council Homes Programme. A further report will be provided in November.

Councillor Price queried whether the increasing cost of building materials has been factored into the calculations. The Housing Director confirmed that they are aware of this and some allowance has been made and we would like to get agreement today so the tender process could commence as soon as possible. If it proved unviable we would not proceed and this would come back to Committee to be discussed.

Councillor Williamson requested that when trying to identify infill plots, that ward Councillors for that area are consulted as they sometimes have a closer view. The Housing Director confirmed there is a report coming to this committee in July detailing the approach to infill sites. Part of this process is the development of the Development Standard by the task and finish group which will put in place our processes moving forwards and guidance/views from Members are always sought.

Councillor Galer queried whether bank/building societies requirements for brick and tile construction will cause an issue in Right to Buy situations in modular housing in the future. The Housing Director advised that if after the tender process we opt for modular built properties, the product we are looking at is a mortgageable product. They have to have a minimum of 60 year life to meet the requirements. Also we want our properties to be robust and be appropriate to meet our needs for that time.

Councillor Wainwright stated that infill sites are quite often contentious, but could we look at land that isn't on council estates but possibly look at our land

such as Beacon Park for phase 3. The Housing Director advised we can certainly look at other land owned by the council that isn't in the Housing Revenue Account to provide council homes on, but there is a cost for that, for example Beach Coach Station, the council is acquiring that land to the HRA from the General Fund and there is a cost to purchase that land, whereas if we are building on HRA land there is no land value, it is free because the council has already bought that land and owns it. We will certainly look at non HRA land but we would need to look at the overall cost effectiveness of this option. Our own HRA land will not be the only other land that is used to provide affordable homes for the council.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:-

1. Noted the report and progress to date
2. Approved the drawdown of the expenditure to be incurred in the development of the Beach Coach Station development as set out in the Confidential Appendix
3. Approved, subject to the Council's conditional offer set out in the Confidential Appendix being accepted, the drawdown of the expenditure required to acquire the three affordable homes at St Nicholas Drive, Caister via a Section 106 Agreement.
4. Delegated expenditure in relation to recommendations 2 and 3 above to the Housing Director

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 -COUNCIL HOME PROGRAMME

(Confidential Minute on this Item)

The meeting ended at: 19:20