



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Monday, 03 October 2022 at 18:30

PRESENT :

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

Councillor G Carpenter attended as a sub for Councillor D Hammond.
Councillor Bensly attended as a substitute for Councillor Candon.

Also in attendance were:

Kate Blakemore (Strategic Director); Karen Sly (Finance Director); Jane Beck (Head of Property and Asset Management); Nicola Turner (Housing Director), Tanya Rayner (Housing Options Service Manager); Sue Bolan (Enabling and Empty Homes Officer), Matthew Man (Leisure Strategy and Contract Manager) and Sammy Wintle (Corporate Services Manager).

01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Galer, Candon, D Hammond, Cameron and Smith-Clare.

02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared at the meeting.

03 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 July 2022 were confirmed.

Councillor Wainwright referred to the Asset Management Strategy which was discussed at the previous meeting and asked why this had now been moved back to the Committee date in November and had not been brought to this meeting. The Director of Housing Assets advised that a stock condition survey had now been procured but more information was needed to be able to progress with the Asset Management Strategy and therefore this had been pushed back to allow this work to be completed fully.

04 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and noted the contents of the Forward Plan.

05 PLAYGROUND & OPEN SPACE AUDIT

Members received and considered the Head of Property and Asset Management's report which provided Members with an update on the progress of the play area and open space action plan which had been agreed following an audit on the Play and Open Space.

Members received a presentation from the Head of Property and Asset Management which provided Members with a comprehensive overview of the works that had been identified as part of the audit, together with redesign and refurbishment schemes, existing funding / finance and finance / funding opportunities.

Councillor Grant asked for clarification on Section 111 monies and what these were, it was advised that these were similar to Section 106 monies but Section 111 monies were chargeable by every property.

Councillor Grant asked with regard to a budget which used to be allocated to GYBS parks of around £155,000 which he believed was just for the litter bins, he referred to the report where this budget had now been listed as £96,000 and therefore sought clarification as to the budget and whether this could be used. The Head of Property and Asset Management advised that litter collection would sit under ground maintenance within Environmental Services as the client and therefore was not funding that could be accessed, however she advised that all budget areas were being looked at and reviewed.

Councillor Grant further discussed companies which had been approached to provide quotes for repairs to or replacement equipment and advised that in his experience there was a need to challenge prices quoted at every opportunity to ensure the best price was being offered. The Head of Property and Asset Management advised that providers were being given requirements and asked to provide budget ranges to ensure a range of options were being provided.

Councillor Price commented that there were a number of areas that could benefit from refurbishment or replacement equipment and hoped that those wards who needed it the most would see good quality repairs or new equipment as soon as possible. The Head of Property and Asset Management advised that this was exactly the reason a 5 year programme had been introduced.

Councillor Williamson raised some concern with regard to these type of plans being considered previously whereby works had not been completed and he commented that he wouldn't like to see this happen again. Councillor Williamson referred to the park facility within the Claydon ward which sees a significant number of users over the weekends, he advised that this area had not been well looked after at all. He also referred to the Pavilion Skate park which was used frequently and he welcomed maintenance at this site.

Councillor Williamson commented on the Muga area within the Claydon ward and advised that this was another area which had been promised maintenance but this had not been completed. He suggested that the Council approach Shrublands Football Club to see if they would have any funding opportunities to be used for this site and it was further suggested that Shrublands Football Club if approached may want to consider managing and maintaining the site. The Strategic Director advised that there were in regular discussions with the Football Association in respect of the Wellesley and therefore this matter could be picked up in discussion to see if this could be cross referenced. *Councillor Flaxman-Taylor hereby declared a personal interest as her relative was the Chairman of the Shrublands Football Association*

Councillor Jeal commented on the Middlegate redevelopment play park which in his opinion was fantastic and a great example of what could be available, he also referred to the St Georges Park play area but he advised his main concern was the play facility at Blackfriars Road which only had 2 swings available, he asked how long it would be before the Nelson ward got any facilities as he was aware there were no section 106 monies available and the ward itself was the most deprived in the Borough. The Head of Property and Asset Management advised that the facility at Blackfriars Road had been listed and recognised as a high level play area and therefore was being looked at as part of the 5 year programme, she advised that due to the Blackfriars Road facility not meeting the criteria it did not qualify for levelling up monies.

Councillor Talbot asked with regard to the facility at Ferrier Road and why the spinning pole had been removed but yet some equipment that does not work and has not worked for a long time had been left, Councillor Talbot also referred to 2 roundabouts at the site one of which was broken and one of which was old but yet could be restored. It was advised that the spinning pole had been removed as replacement equipment was not available, it was also advised that if equipment was broken but some parts were still in working condition and the structure was not dangerous these would remain in place, equipment would only be removed if it had become dangerous. It was hoped that some equipment could be restored rather than removed or replaced.

Councillor Talbot also referred to a small facility on George Street which had not been identified and it was advised that this would be looked into.

Councillor Wainwright sort clarification as to whether those Parish Councils areas

which have play equipment are maintained by the Borough Council, this was confirmed. Councillor Wainwright commented that in his opinion due to the level of concurrent function grants that Parish Councils receive, Parish Councils should manage and maintain these facilities themselves as by the Borough Council continuing to maintain these this could be seen as acting as another level of funding being given to the Parishes, Councillor Wainwright asked for this matter to be looked into.

Councillor Wainwright referred to a piece of equipment that he had been trying to source for one of the facilities within the Magdalen area and he advised that for a basket swing he had been quoted £14,190 which did not include installation, he felt this was an extremely large quote for such an item and commented that he felt the companies supplying the equipment should be looked into to ensure the Council was getting the best for its money. The Head of Property and Asset Management advised that the particular item in question, Officers had hoped that the frame could be re-used as the piece of equipment is no longer made.

Councillor Grant commented that in his opinion there would be merit in the Council speaking to the Parishes to discuss the options of the managing and maintaining of the parks as this could be seen as an asset for the Parish Councils.

Councillor Bensly asked if as part of the public consultation on play parks the local parish Councils could have more involvement in this and asked if a meeting could be set up with Hemsby Parish Council to discuss the parks. The Head of Property and Asset Management confirmed that Hemsby Parish Council been in consultation with the Council and that a commitment had been made to meet with the Parish Council. Councillor Bensly thanked Officers for the work which had gone into the audit and report.

Councillor Martin commented that she was pleased to see that disabled user groups had been considered and consulted as part of the audit and report and hoped that this would continue in terms of speaking to lots of different user groups.

The Chairman advised that the play audits would be undertaken annually.

Councillor Price suggested that businesses be approached to ask if they would be prepared to sponsor the play parks.

RESOLVED :

- (1) Notes the work undertaken to date in the analysis of sites and identification of high priority sites
- (2) Approves the continued investigations for redesign and refurbishment of the attached Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 list of sites
- (3) Continue to address the priority list of end of life equipment 1-5 years.
- (4) Review current revenue budget allocation for play and open space to include GYNorse allocation through Public Works funding to ensure best utilisation of budget.
- (5) Capital budget allocation for future years subject to funding being available to be considered through individual business case development on a site by site basis.

06 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET MONITORING REPORT PERIOD 4 2022-2023

The Committee received and considered the HRA Service Accountant's report which asked Members to consider the 2022/23 Housing Revenue and Capital Budget monitoring position at the end of period 4.

The Finance Director advised that the report presented the period 4 budget monitoring position for the Housing Revenue Account.

The detail of the report highlighted the variances on spend and income for the current year which is currently overall expected to be an underspend of just under £2million compared to the budgeted position as set in February this year.

The more significant movements are due to a reduced call on the use of revenue to finance the capital programme due to increased capital receipts being generated in the current year from a greater number of right to buys than previously estimated. At the end of period 4 there had been 18 right to buy sales compared to a full year estimate of 20.

The HRA will continue to face inflationary pressures, for example the yet to be finalised pay award for 2022/23 and also increased utility and materials costs. Whilst the position as reported currently shows an underspend in the current year, this is likely to be mitigated by increased material costs and utility costs for the remainder of the year.

It was reported that the overall position would continue to be monitored and used to inform the budget work for 2023/24.

Section 5 of the report provided an overview of the current consultation paper seeking views in relation introduction of a rent ceiling for 2023/24.

Following the end of the 1% reduction to all social rents in 2019/20, the annual rent setting has been on the basis of CPI plus 1% increases which was expected to be in place until 2025. For 2022/23 this was an increase of 4.1%.

With forecasts of CPI being in the region of 10 to 11% which is well in excess of inflation forecast when the rent policy was set, this would permit social housing rent increases from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 of to be 11.0% or more.

With the much higher than expected rate of inflation already placing considerable pressure on many households, including those living in social housing, the department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has decided to consult on a new Direction from the Secretary of State to the Regulator of Social Housing on social housing rents which would require the Regulator to amend its Rent Standard so that the current CPI+1% limit on

annual rent increases would be subject to a ceiling from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The consultation sets a draft ceiling of 5% which would act as the upper limit on the maximum permitted annual rent increase a Registered Provider is allowed to implement. The consultation paper is also seeking views on 3%, 5% and 7% as ceiling options.

The outcome of the consultation and the spending pressures for the HRA will continue to be monitored and used to inform the budget for 2023/24.

Councillor Williamson commented with regard to inflation costs and how he felt these would hit the residents hard. Councillor Williamson referred to repairs and maintenance budget and sort clarity of the total amount of budget for repairs by GYN, he commented that he felt this was an excessively high amount for a management fee. The Strategic Director reported that the joint venture was currently being looked at and a report would be brought back to Members in due course.

Councillor Wainwright commented with regard to the capital expenditure which showed a £14m budget but a year to date spend of only £2.6m, he felt that this was an incredibly low spend and asked why works were so behind with properties deteriorating and monies not being spent. The Director of Housing Assets advised that a review was ongoing to look at accurate spend and how this could be improved.

Councillor Grant asked with regard to right to buy monies and whether the council was in a position to spend all of these rather than having to return monies, this was confirmed.

Councillor Talbot asked whether the repairs and maintenance budget included both internal and external works as she commented there were a number of external doors within her ward that could be replaced. The Director of Housing Assets asked Councillor Talbot to provide a list of those properties where this could be looked at, but advised that replacement doors would fall under capital expenditure.

RESOLVED :

That the Committee :-

Consider and note the 2022/23 Housing revenue and capital budget monitoring position as at the end of period 4.

07 EMPTY HOMES UPDATE

Members received and considered the Enabling and Empty Homes Officer's report which provided Members with an update of current empty homes work, issues and next steps.

RESOLVED :

That the Committee :-

Note the contents of the report and the next steps.

08 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Members received and considered the Strategic Directors and Development Officer's report which provided Members with an update on the first years action plan of the Active GY Framework.

The Leisure Strategy and Contract Manager provided Members with a highlight summary of the work that had been undertaken to date.

Councillor Wainwright asked with regard to target schools which had been referred to within the report and it was advised that a list of those schools contacted would be circulated to Members.

Councillor Talbot asked with regard to the referral scheme and whether there was a specific criteria for this scheme, it was advised that the scheme in year 1 focussed on those with Diabetes and then year 2 would be those with mental health issues. Councillor Talbot commented that some disabilities meant that exercise proved difficult so asked if there was to be an offer of a reduced rate use for the swimming pool for those that could use this facility, it was advised that this was looking likely although this had not been confirmed.

Councillor Williamson asked if any metric data would be available to see the data of those involved in the interventions available as he felt that it would be useful to have this data running alongside any updates given. It was agreed that some key metric performance measures could be looked into and form part of an update to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee moving forward

Councillor Bently commented on how he felt the report was extremely positive and asked if an all member update could be given moving forward. It was agreed that the insight report together with appendices could be circulated to all Members.

Councillor Williamson commented on the importance of looking at all areas, not just focussing on what can be provided at the Marina Centre, it was reported that an Active Community Manager had now been appointed who would now look at outreach work in the community.

RESOLVED :

That Committee :-

- (1) Note the contents of the report
- (2) Note the impact report and outcomes 2021/2022
- (3) Agree to the Active GY Framework Action Plan.

09 ROUGH SLEEPING FUNDING AND SERVICE UPDATE

Members received and considered the Housing Director's report which provided Members with information on the work undertaken to reduce the number of rough sleepers and the funding which has been secured/bids which are being developed to deliver extra services to support rough sleepers in the Borough.

Councillor Williamson commented on the positive news of the Transitional Housing Scheme.

Councillor Grant commented on the positives within the report and asked the Housing Options Team were now fully staffed. The Housing Options Service Manager reported that some recent recruitment had been undertaken and therefore it was hoped that within the next few weeks the service would be fully staffed. It was further advised that the team were currently working on the backlog of work and this was currently for applications received in July / August. It was hoped that the new online system would be available from December.

Councillor Martin commented that she was pleased to see applications would be going online but raised some concern as to housing applications appearing to go missing, as she had been made aware of 5 in one year. Councillor Martin commented that in her opinion the scheme was really positive. The Housing Options Service Manager asked if Members were aware of missing applications that they make the Officers aware of these, and advised that by having an online system this would assist in preventing any paperwork being lost.

Councillor Martin asked with regard to the online system and whether those already on the list would remain on the list when moving over to the online system and wouldn't lose their place in the system. The Housing Options Service Manager advised the customers would be given a period of 4 weeks to re apply in order to not lost their place in the system, but it was noted that support would be offered to those who required it in regard to re applying.

Action : An all Member briefing to be arranged to discuss the housing allocation scheme and waiting list.

RESOLVED :

That Committee note the update on the work of the Rough Sleeping Team and the external funding secured and bring bid for.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business discussed at the meeting.

The meeting ended at: TBC