



**GREAT YARMOUTH**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

## Minutes

Monday, 08 November 2021 at 18:30

### PRESENT:-

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

Councillor A Wright attended as a substitute for Councillor Jeal.  
Councillor Wells attended as a substitute for Councillor Price.

Mrs N Turner (Housing Director), Mrs P Boyce (Strategic Director), Mrs K Sly (Finance Director), Mrs D Patterson (HRA Service Accountant), Mr R Heath (Resident Engagement Officer) & Mrs C Webb (Executive Services Officer).

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jeal, Price, Smith-Clare & Talbot.

## **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest given at the meeting.

## **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 were confirmed.

## **4 MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the above minutes which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## **5 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman was pleased to advise Members that the Council had successfully bid for £858,000 to support a number of improvements to the leisure and recreational facilities on the Middlegate Estate.

The funding, from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Estate Regeneration Fund will allow the Council to :

(i) Remove the Multi-Use games Area (MUGA) and create a private and secure garden only available for residents in the surrounding homes. An extension of this garden is proposed by consulting the residents of homes on the first and second floors who have private gardens adjacent to the MUGA which are currently fenced off and many residents struggle to maintain them as they have no direct access to the gardens from their homes. As part of the works, a number of accesses to this new, private garden will be secured so only adjacent residents can use this area, removing an existing rat run. These works will benefit the residents of 107 homes.

(ii) Removal and upgrade of three play areas (Clarendon North, Clarendon South and Dorset Close). Existing hard safety surfaces will be replaced with grass surfacing. One play area will provide a bespoke, accessible play area.

(iii) Installation of a physical activity course in the public realm, this will include a mixture of Parkour (low level only) equipment and outdoor gym equipment promoting movement through the estate and linking to other recreational facilities beyond the estate, the exact location is yet to be determined; and

(iv) Resident engagement will inform the choice of play equipment including a design competition of the accessible play area. The theme for this is herring fishing.

The funding available needs to be spent by 31 March 2022. The wider work on exploring the viability of regenerating the estate is continuing with a report expected to be considered by the Middlegate Member Working Group and this Committee, in the New Year.

## **6 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

The Committee requested that the following additions to the Forward Plan:-

- (i) Selective licensing update and next steps
- (ii) De-carbonisation of council housing stock
- (iii) GYN maintenance of housing stock including complaints handling and repairs
- (iv) Review of sheltered accommodation; and
- (v) Integrated Care System (ICS) – proposed Health & Well-being Partnership Governance 2022/23.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the Forward Plan with the additional items agreed at the meeting.

## **7 HRA PERIOD 6 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report from the HRA Service Accountant

The HRA Service Accountant reported that the HRA currently shows a revised 21/22 forecast deficit of £2.2m, from an original forecast deficit of £2.8m, resulting in a favorable movement of £600k. Repairs and maintenance budgets continue to reflect a reduction, along with reduced interest payable in year, following the revisions to the affordable and additional housing schemes in 2021/22. The HRA has a major capital works budget of £13.7m for 2021/22. As at period 6, the capital budget forecast is revised to deliver a £10m programme in year.

The HRA Capital spend to the end of period 6 totals £3.3m. Spend is expected to increase as the year progresses, although projects have been affected by time pressures and the increased difficulty in sourcing materials. Budget totaling £1.9m is currently forecast to be carried forward into 2022/23. With effect from 1 April 2021, the regulations around the use of Retained Right to Buy receipts were changed. To reflect this change, the Council has reduced its affordable housing budget in year, from £3.6m to £1.8m.

The HRA Service Accountant highlighted that the HRA has recently submitted a capital funding bid, under the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund. This bid is to support a project targeting 85 properties within the borough, aiming to improve the energy performance of each dwelling. The Council also submitted a bid to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which formed part of a £10 million pound fund, aimed to support estate regeneration. The bid was successful, with funds aimed to support works to improve the leisure and recreation facilities on the Middlegate estate.

The HRA Service Accountant reported that Right to Buy sales continue to be lower

than previous years, with 5 sale completions in quarter 1 and no sales in quarter 2. This will continue to be monitored going forward, as this will impact capital financing going forward.

Councillor A Wright reported that he had read that a local authority had purchased a heat seeking drone which was able to survey properties from the air as part of their de-carbonisation strategy and he asked whether the Council would consider such a purchase to seek out the worst insulated private sector homes in the borough. **The Director of Housing agreed to discuss this proposal with the Head of Property & Asset Management.**

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee consider and note the 2021/22/Housing Revenue & Capital Budget monitoring position as at the end of period 6.

## **8 COUNCIL HOUSING COMPLIANCE AND PERFORMANCE - SIX MONTHLY UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report from the Housing Director and the Resident Engagement Officer.

The Resident Engagement Officer gave an overview of the first six-monthly compliance and performance update in relation to the Council's housing stock and provided an update on regulatory compliance, resident engagement and customer satisfaction statistics regarding the Housing Service.

Councillor Candon reported that he was pleased that the backlog of completion of some Fire Risk Assessments was being actively addressed and monitored and would be removed by the end of 2021.

Councillor Wainwright referred the Committee to page 27 of the agenda report and asked for an assurance that the flatted stairwells would be maintained to a decent standard by the caretakers as part of the shared communal areas. **The Housing Director was in discussion with the Head of Property & Asset Management regarding the enclosure of stairwells and would provide an update at the next meeting.**

Councillor Wells asked for clarification regarding the statistics given at 5.2 on page 30 of the agenda report. Over the first two quarters 2021/22, a total of 124 surveys had been returned, the satisfaction figures reflected the percentage of tenants who rated the service good or very good. A response rate of 124 surveys had been received out of a total of how many had been sent out would give Members a much clearer picture. **The Resident Engagement Officer agreed to forward the actual response rate figures to the Committee.** The Housing Director confirmed the the response rate would be provided to the Committee in all future reports.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the report.

## 9 RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee received and considered the report from the Resident Engagement Officer.

The Resident Engagement Officer gave an overview of the development of the resident Engagement Strategy and sought endorsement of the strategy to support and expand how the Council engaged and involved tenants across the Housing Service.

Councillor Candon asked for clarification as to how the Community Representatives were selected and asked that all Members be informed of the Community Representatives in their ward so that they engage with them and work alongside them for the betterment of the ward. The Housing Director assured Members that the Community Representatives were not in place to replace the role of a ward Councillor in any shape or form.

Councillor Wainwright agreed that he shared the same concerns of Councillor Candon. The role of a Community Representative was to be applauded but it must not be to the detriment of a ward Councillor. He asked how the Community Representatives had been selected and appointed and asked for details of the budget set aside to support these roles. The Housing Director reported that tenants were offered a range of initiatives to get involved as it was imperative that the Housing Service understood what was happening on our estates at grass root level.

Councillor Williamson reported that he was aware what was happening on the estates in his ward but that when he tried to contact Graham Hollingdale at Norse to discuss issues that he could never get through to him on the phone. The workload was too big and diverse for MESH, Make it Happen or Community to tackle in their present formats and the Tenants Forum had been disbanded but had been disillusioned that they had not been listened too. However, the Housing Department had committed Members willing to assist them in tackling issues on their estates which he felt was being overlooked or dismissed.

All Members were of the opinion that they needed a broader understanding of how tenant participation worked in the housing sector.

Councillor Williamson referred to the Action Plan detailed in Appendix B and asked whether the data was qualitative or quantitative when demonstrating success as there were no outcomes listed and suggested that a report should be drafted to members from the information contained in this Action Plan. The Resident Engagement Officer informed the Committee that there was a list of over 300 tenant volunteers who were willing to undertake engagement via a number of different formats from receiving a newsletter to taking part in a focus group. The Director of Housing reported that she understood Members concerns regarding the Action Plan and assured them that it would be populated with outcomes and benchmarks going forwards.

Councillor Wells suggested that a name change from Community Representative to Community Champion might be advisable. Councillor Wainwright asked for sight of the handbook which had been developed for Community Representatives as he was unaware that such a document existed. **The Housing Director agreed to provide all**

**members with a copy of the Handbook.**

Councillor Flaxman-Taylor asked if there was any other initiatives pending apart from a Tenant Survey and that from a Member perspective, this report was very disappointing as there was a lot of work being undertaken in the background, by stealth it felt like, than Members were aware of. She further asked what the response time was for resolving issues raised by Community Representatives as for Members, this usually took a very long time, as officers did not get back to members promptly to discuss issues when contacted. **The Housing Director asked Members to flag any outstanding issues to her and she would follow them up as a matter of urgency.**

The Housing Director once again assured Members that their role was key and was not being replaced or diluted by Community Representatives and that resident engagement was a learning process.

Councillor Martin reported that she welcomed the strategy but agreed that it required some refinement but it was imperative to build trust with tenants to ensure they received the best Housing Service the Council could offer. She asked for confirmation as to what an e-zene was and that she was unaware of the dedicated resident engagement email address and what purpose it served. The Resident Engagement Officer reported that an e-zene was a monthly email giving new opportunities, and complemented the Tenants News & Views and he would add all Members to the distribution list.

**The Housing Director reported that she had taken on board all of the Members comments and she would arrange a Briefing Session for Members and provide regular feedback on a 6 monthly basis.**

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee adopt the Resident Engagement Strategy.

## **10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

## **11 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:-

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 3 of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act.

## **12 ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY FOR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING SCHEME**

(Confidential Minute on this Item)

The meeting ended at: 20:30