



Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 19 May 2022 at 18:30

Present :

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

Councillor G Carpenter attended as substitute for Councillor D Hammond.

Also in attendance :-

Mrs K Blakemore (Strategic Director); Mrs N Turner (Housing Director); Mr C Furlong (Director of Housing Assets); Mr J Gibbs (Tenancy Services Manager); Mr R Heath (Resident Engagement Officer) and Sammy Wintle (Corporate Services Manager).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Hammond.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests declared at the meeting.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 10 March 2022 were confirmed.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Williamson asked with regard to his request for an analysis of the budget allocated to the management of the housing stock by GYN which had been requested at the last meeting. Councillor Wainwright advised that he had recently attended a GYN Liaison Board meeting where it had been agreed a report would be brought to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee.

Action : It was agreed that this matter be added to the Forward Plan.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and noted the Forward Plan.

6 RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT - 6 MONTHLY REPORT

Members received and considered the Resident Engagement Officer's report which provided an update on resident engagement and progress towards delivering the Resident Engagement Strategy and an annual overview of the insight surveys Tenancy Services which had been undertaken for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 March 2022.

Members received a presentation from Russel Heath, Resident Engagement Officer.

Councillor Talbot commented that she was pleased to see the safety elements of the report such as the gas cooker points but also noted that it was good to see that carpet grippers were to remain in situ which would be really helpful to families when wanting to lay carpets. Councillor Talbot sought clarification as to whether upon emptying a property whether curtain poles and carpet were still removed if they were in good order before a new tenant begins a tenancy. The Housing Asset Manager reported that this matter was being looked into and standards were being reviewed as there was a need to ensure the standards are where they needed to be. The Tenancy Services Manager reported that once a notice to terminate is received a visit is undertaken to the property to ascertain what can be kept within the property. It was advised that information is given to vacating tenants/ next of kin with regard to recycling.

Councillor Williamson commented that there was a need to look at those hard to reach groups and areas. The Resident Engagement Officer advised that Officers were looking to make information as accessible as possible for example an increase of online support or a telephone survey.

Councillor Price commented there was a need for a common sense approach and echoed comments made by Councillor Talbot.

Councillor Smith-Clare suggested that an incentive scheme be considered to encourage engagement.

Councillor Grant referred to comments that had been made with regard to carpet being left in properties and commented that it had been the case carpet had never been left in the properties he had been made aware of. He commented that in his opinion the report was very much needed and contained some great ideas and also suggested that a tenancy audit was an ideal way of getting information needed whilst also targeting those silent partners as a priority.

The Chairman commented that she was glad to see the report and its contents and agreed that she was pleased to see retention of carpets within the properties was now being considered as this was a big cost to replace.

RESOLVED ;

That Committee note the report.

7 DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY

The Committee received and considered the Housing Director's report which provided information on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Council and Norfolk wide response to the act and the funding provided to the Council to support its response to the act.

Councillor Candon commented that he felt this was a brilliant report and was glad to see that the council were working to identify where support was not being offered.

Councillor Williamson welcomed the report but raised concern with regard to the funding being only for 2 years and asked whether this was likely to be continued. The Housing Director advised that it was not clear currently on future funding.

Councillor Smith-Clare advised that he represented GYBC on the Police Crime and Commissioner Panel and commented that there had been a steady increase in domestic violence cases therefore there was a need for investment in this area. He also suggested that links in with local school would be welcomed.

Councillor Price also welcomed the report and commented in his opinion this matter needed to be pursued, he raised some concern with regard to funding and the need to deliver the message to those that need to hear it to allow those people to come forward.

Councillor Talbot commented that people in those situations of domestic abuse can be difficult to reach and therefore made a suggestion that any information be shared with hairdressing salons, local schools and cafes to try and deliver the message far and wide.

Councillor Martin asked if the Council had domestic abuse champions in place, although it was confirmed that these were not currently in place but all staff were required to undertake E-learning and all housing staff would be receiving enhanced training.

ACTION : The need for Domestic Abuse Champions to be discussed with the Council's Safeguarding Team.

The Chairman welcomed the report and commented on the need create and provide somewhere for safe conversation.

Councillor Wainwright also raised some concern following previous comments made with regard to funding, he commented in his opinion cases of domestic violence would likely worsen with the cost of living crisis therefore the need for secured for funding was required.

RESOLVED :
That Committee:

(1) Adopt the Norfolk Domestic Abuse Housing Protocol 2022-25.

(2) Note the prior signing of Memorandum of Understandings in relation to the receipt of £32,365 New Burdens Funding in 2021/1 and 2022/3 for the additional responsibilities on the Council as a result of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

(3) Note the funding from Norfolk County Council to meet the costs of achieving DAHA accreditation.

(4) Note the development of the Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy for Norfolk 2021-24 and the actions identified in the strategy to support victims of domestic abuse.

8 TRANSITIONAL HOUSING SCHEME UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the Housing Director's report which provided an update on the Council's delivery of a Transitional Housing Scheme and the bid for funding via the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme which had been submitted for capital and revenue funding to deliver the scheme. The Transitional Housing Scheme would provide a self-contained home and support for up to two years for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping who have low or medium support needs to enable them to transition to settled accommodation.

Councillor Wainwright asked for clarification when the council would be expecting news on the bid submitted from Homes England, it was advised that news was anticipated shortly and the outcome would be fed back to Members once received.

Councillor Williamson welcomed the scheme.

RESOLVED :-

That Committee

(1) Approve, subject to a successful grant application, the purchase of six properties and the procurement of six modular homes, or if required an alternative option to deliver the Transitional Housing Scheme.

(2) Recommend to Full Council the approval, subject to a successful application for grant funding, the expenditure and the borrowing set out at paragraph 4.4 of the Confidential Appendix to deliver the Transitional Housing

Scheme.

(3) Delegate decisions in relation to the delivery of the Transitional Housing Scheme through acquisition of properties in accordance with the Property Acquisitions and Disposals Policy and delivery of the remaining homes within the scheme to a Strategic Director and the Section 151 Officer

(4) Approve the procurement of a third-party support provider to deliver the support and manage the twelve homes.

(5) Acknowledge the previous acceptance of the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme grant funding and conditions.

9 HOUSING GREEN DEAL UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the Housing Director's report which provided information on the Council's work to establish and agree with Homes England a Treasury Green Book compliant Housing Deal in order to support its interventions in the Great Yarmouth housing market to address market failure and issues of poor-quality housing.

Councillor Williamson asked with regard to the figures listed within 2.3 of the Housing Director's report and sort clarification as to whether the figure listed was correct, **ACTION** :That this matter be looked into.

RESOLVED :

That the Committee note the report.

10 SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW

Members received and considered the Tenancy Services Manager's report which set out the review undertaken of the Council's sheltered housing provision.

Members received a comprehensive presentation from the Tenancy Services Manager.

Councillor Grant commented in his opinion the current waiting list system was too small as he stated that he was confident there would be more people who would want to be added to the list if spaces were available, and therefore he disagreed there was a lack of demand for properties.

Action :- It was agreed that the definition once completed be shared with the Committee prior to the agreement being signed off.

Councillor Wainwright expressed his concern to comments that had been made with regard to sheltered accommodation being hard to let to which he disagreed, he asked if as a Council there was enough effort made to communicate with those people that were in need of sheltered housing. He commented that in his opinion there was an need to ensure communal rooms were used a lot more, he suggested that Tenancy Officers needed to take ownership of the rooms and organise events to engage with the community.

Councillor Wainwright also referred to the issues of mobility scooters and the need for this matter to be looked into as he felt if there was to be new storage facilities for these, the issue of how far away the storage was from the properties needed to be considered.

The Strategic Director advised that Chris Furlong, Director of Housing Assets would be undertaking a piece of work to look at how the Council operates their stock and this would be brought back to the Committee in September. The Strategic Director also advised that the Council were working with the CCG on the prevent agenda and therefore potential use of the communal rooms as a base for engaging with residents could be an option.

Councillor Williamson welcomed the investment in the communal rooms as he confirmed these facilities were well used. Councillor Williamson raised some concern with regard to the storage facility for the mobility scooters and the need to look at the issue of distance from properties to storage. There was also some concern with regard to those that did not have a washing machine within their property and how this would be undertaken. The Tenancy Services Manager responded to concerns raised and advised that mobility scooters come in a range of various sizes and therefore a solution for storage was needed but agreed that this solution needed to be accessible from residents homes. The Tenancy Services Manager also commented with regard to washing machines, that there was a need to understand if these could be supplied and fitted and how this is supported.

Councillor Martin agreed that there was a need to look at lowering the age for those accepted for sheltered housing facility, she raised some concern with regard to the low demand for properties. Councillor Martin commented with regard to the Council's connection with Norfolk County Council as she advised of a waiting list for people with care needs requiring sheltered accommodation she suggested that there was a need for more linkage in with social care.

Councillor Martin also asked with regard to intruder alarms and whether these were included in the properties or extra to residents, this was confirmed as included. Councillor Martin commented with regard to the exterior at Caister Road and whether local organisations had been contacted such as Freshly Greated to see if they can help.

Councillor Grant asked if communal rooms could form part of the inspection undertaken on properties every 5 years.

Councillor Price welcomed the report and commented that there was a need to ensure costings were right to ensure the service could be retained.

The Chairman asked if who the Tenancy Support Co-ordinator was going to be and it was advised that this was to be confirmed. She asked for a business case for the electric scooters to be brought back to the Committee. She advised Members that the communal areas were being brought through and discussed at the Locality Board and community workshop meetings.

Action : Business case on Mobility Scooters to come back to the Committee once complete.

RESOLVED :

That Housing & Neighbourhood Committee Approve

- Allocation of first floor homes at Grenville Place (26 dwellings) and Conway Road (13 dwellings) are offered to applicants 50 and over (subject to application verification) - reviewed in 1 year.
- Cyclical maintenance programme is reviewed to ensure communal areas/rooms are better maintained.
- A revenue allocation of £25,000 is made to allow for the purchase of new soft furnishings subject to the development of schedules for improvement and priority, relating to each communal rooms targeting the worse issues.
- Tenants that have the use of Laundry Rooms are consulted as to their need going forwards, and where Laundry Rooms are not required they are closed with service charges being reduced accordingly
- That a business case is developed to trial a mobility scooter store (5 units) on an estate to see if this effectively addresses this storage need identified by our tenants
- An asset management parking strategy is developed to consider sustainable transport opportunities for residents.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman advised of an email she had received with regard to the Jubilee Ground Breaking Ceremony which was due to take place on Tuesday 24th May at Midday.

12 TRANSITIONAL HOUSING SCHEME CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX

The Committee received and noted the report.

The meeting ended at: 20:30