

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 14 June 2018 at 18:30

PRESENT:

Councillor Grant (in the Chair); Councillors Bird, G Carpenter, Drewitt, Flaxman-Taylor, Hacon, Hammond, Smith-Clare, Martin & Williamson.

Councillor Fairhead attended as a substitute for Councillor Wainwright.

Councillor Pratt attended as a substitute for Councillor C Walker.

Mrs K Watts (Strategic Director), Mrs V George (Head of Housing), Mr T Chaplin (Deputy Head of Housing), Mrs A Nugent (Rent Manager), Mr I Talbot (Senior Projects Officer) & Mr D Addy (Senior Housing Licensing Officer).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stenhouse, Wainwright

& C Walker.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Bird & Hammond declared a personal interest in item number 6 as they were both landlords. However, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, they were allowed to both speak and vote on the matter but decided only to speak and not to vote on the item.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2018 were confirmed.

4 MATTERS ARISING

(a) Charging of Mobility Scooters.

The Head of Housing gave an update in regard to the external charging of mobility scooters in flatted areas. To ensure tenants adhered to the advice from the Fire Services, it was recommended that tenants charge the mobility scooter in their home, as opposed to trailing an electric cable outside of their property and charging the scooter outside.

The Head of Housing reported that if the Council provided charging areas, the issue of PAT testing of mobility scooters by the Council would also need to be addressed. The Chairman reported that the Council currently addressed the need on a case by case basis.

The Strategic Director suggested that the Council should clarify the situation with the Health & Safety Executive and ask the Fire Service for their latest opinion as the previous advice was over five years old.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Housing take advice from the Health & Safety Executive and the Fire Service and report back to a future meeting.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received & considered the Forward Plan.

The Strategic Director reported that in regard to item numbers 15 & 16, the reports would be provided by the Strategic Director as the post of Head of Community Development & Regeneration was obsolete.

The Chairman requested that Play Park Provision, i.e, play park provision,

maintenance schedules and budget provision be added to the Forward Plan. The Strategic Director reported that Paul Shucksmith, Senior Environmental Ranger, would provide the report.

6 SELECTIVE LICENSING PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received & considered the report from the Strategic Director & Senior Housing Licensing Officer.

The Strategic Director & the Senior Housing Licensing Officer gave a presentation on the proposal and consultation for a Selective Licensing Scheme. They presented an update against the original business case, including the potential use of a Service Delivery Partner.

A Member questioned whether this was a case of "double standards" as this initiative excluded social housing which was often in need of this type of intervention. The Head of Housing reported that Decent Homes would address these issues over the next five year period.

The Strategic Director reported that it was proposed to utilise the Community Connectors by visiting licensed properties with Housing Inspectors and identifying tenants needs before tackling them in partnership with other agencies. It was proposed to redirect this resource for an initial two year period.

The Strategic Director reported that the scheme was due to go live on 14 December 2018 but the launch date might be put back to the New Year.

RESOLVED:

(i) That the Committee approve the Consultation on Selective Licensing in the Nelson Ward document and to commence the consultation process which will run from 15 June 2018 to 24 August 2018.

(ii) That the Committee note the proposed use of Community Connectors in the Selective Licensing area to further strengthen the outcomes of this project, and

(iii) That the Committee note that Full Council will receive a Selective Licensing recommendation Report on the 13 September 2018, following the 10 week stakeholder consultation.

7 COMMUNITY HOUSING ADAPTATIONS POLICY 2018

The Committee received & considered the report from the Senior Projects Officer which detailed the Council's approach to the provision of aids and

adaptations for housing tenants, who were eligible to receive them and how they would be delivered.

A Member was concerned that if elderly tenants who were under-occupying their property could not be found suitable alternative accommodation, that they might be left struggling indefinitely in a property which did not meet their needs. The Head of Housing reported that discretion could be used where an elderly applicant had been waiting in excess of a year for a property to become available that was either adapted or could be adapted at a lower cost.

A Member asked that an update report be presented to Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee consider and approve the Council's Housing Adaptations Policy 2018.

8 RECHARGABLE REPAIRS POLICY 2018

The Committee received & considered the report from the Rent Manager.

The Rent Manager reported that by being clear with tenants and leaseholders about which repairs attracted a recharge, tenants could, if they wished, arrange for the work to be dealt with privately or they could undertake the work for themselves, e.g, unblocking a sink, which could be cheaper than paying the minimum charge of £45.00. Tenants/Leaseholders would be advised that should the work exceed £45.00, they would be recharged for the full cost of the works. The option of a pre-payment and a minimum charge of £45.00 would be new for tenants and leaseholders.

Members requested confirmation that vulnerable tenants would be fully supported during this process.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee approve the Council's Rechargeable Repairs Policy.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

10 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

The meeting ended at: 19:45