



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 15 July 2021 at 18:30

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cameron & Williamson.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared at the meeting.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021 were confirmed.

4 MATTERS ARISING

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

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the Forward Plan.

6 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT OUTTURN 2020/21

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

The HRA Service Accountant reported the draft outturn position for the Housing Revenue Account for the 2020/21 financial year, which had been used to inform the production of the statutory account for audit and subsequent approval, details of the more significant year-end variances compared to the current budget for 2020/21 and details of the 2020/21 budget under-spend requested to be carried forward to 2021/22.

RESOLVED:-

That the Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee recommend to Full Council the following:

(i) The outturn position for the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21 as included in the report and appendices,

(ii) The updated 2021/22 HRA revenue and expenditure budget as detailed at Appendix C of the report; and

(iii) The updated 2021/22 HRA capital programme and associated financing of the as detailed within the report and at Appendix D.

7 SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW

The Committee received and considered the report from the Tenancy Services Manager.

The Tenancy Services Manager highlighted the salient areas of the report. The review would explore the whole of the sheltered housing offer to tenants both before/during the pandemic and future proof the provision by adapting and refining to the needs of our prospective tenant cohort and the wider community. We would ensure our tenants, the Tenancy Services Team and other stakeholders, including Norfolk County Council Adult Social Services

and Age Concern were consulted to understand what service they would like to see delivered moving forward and to understand future needs and demand. We would consider:

- What elements of the service have worked well (pre and during the current COVID pandemic) and areas that could be improved,
- Tenants preferred communication and support method/frequency,
- Range of services that are desired by sheltered tenants linked to service costs reflecting the self-funding nature of the sheltered housing service,
- Review of current and future demand and need for sheltered housing over the short and long term (10-20 years) including care needs and the types of homes and services needed to meet these needs.,
- Whether the existing types, sizes and locations of sheltered housing properties meet current and future needs and demand,
- What types of communal provision are required within sheltered housing schemes – for example laundry rooms,
- How communal rooms can be effectively operated to ensure all rooms maximise capacity to provide benefits to tenants and the wider community; and
- What other service providers are delivering as part of their sheltered housing offer and best practice in relation to sheltered housing delivery.

The findings would shape the recommendations we make in our final report proposed to be reported to Housing & Neighbourhoods Committee in early 2022, to ensure tenants received the most effective service to support independent living moving forward.

Councillor Wainwright reported that he welcomed the report which was long overdue and asked for further detail regarding the type of detailed consultation which would be undertaken with tenants. The Tenancy Services Manager reported that consultation would mainly be carried out in person by the Tenancy Support officers.

Councillor Wainwright asked if Members could see sight of the questions prior to the consultation. The Tenancy Services Manager reported that he had no problem with this request but would need management support before doing so.

Councillor Smith-Clare asked for clarification regarding paragraph 2.1 of the report, 4th bullet point, relationship with tenants; understanding the need as tenants often battled mental health issues and social isolation in private. The Tenancy Services Manager reported that understanding the need was a crucial driving factor behind the review.

Councillor Price asked if undertaking the consultation in person would be too resource heavy. The Tenancy Services Manager reported that the majority of sheltered housing tenants had a good relationship with their Tenancy Support Officer and this should not be overly resource intensive.

Councillor Price asked if Ward Councillors who had sheltered housing within their

ward would have any input into the review. The Housing Director reported that the consultation questions would be circulated to all Members.

Councillor Martin reported that the warden service had been the heart of a sheltered housing community and that since their departure, communal rooms were under utilised, as few events were run by tenants and she asked what the plans were for these communal rooms moving forward. Councillor Hammond reiterated the need for communal rooms to be up and running again as we came out of the pandemic to help alleviate social isolation and foster a sense of community once again.

The Tenancy Services Manager acknowledged that the communal rooms were the heart of the community and that support would be offered to re-invigorate them moving forwards.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approve the approach to the Sheltered Housing Service review set out in the report.

8 GYBC TENANCY POLICY 2021

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

The Housing Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer reported that the Tenancy Policy provided the basis of the Council's approach to the provision of tenancies and mutual exchanges. The policy had been reviewed and updated to reflect both operational and legislative changes.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee adopt the updated Tenancy Policy.

9 USE OF RETAINED RIGHT TO BUY RECEIPTS UPDATE

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

The Housing Strategy, Policy and performance Officer reported that the updated Use of Retained Right to Buy receipts Policy was approved by the committee on 4 February 2021. In accordance with the policy, this report contained an annual summary of the spend committed to Retained Right to Buy receipts and details of the types and locations of home acquired. As this was the first update report, two years of information had been included in the report for Members information.

Councillor Wainwright reported that this was a good report and emphasised that there was a need to purchase properties across the borough with a view to adapting them for disabled needs.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the report.

10 COUNCIL HOUSING COMPLIANCE AND PERFORMANCE 2020-21

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

The Housing Director reported that the report set out the Council's compliance with the regulatory requirements for its landlord function and provided an overview of complaint handling during 2020/21. It provided a benchmark for the Council's performance and supported the ongoing oversight by the Committee of the Council's landlord compliance and performance.

Councillor Martin referred to appendix 1, page 64 of the report, ASB; residents who did not have smartphones and were unable to access the app to report incidents of ASB, often had to make numerous calls to the Council and were not called back even when they left voicemails which was unacceptable. Residents just wanted to make one direct call to report incidents of ASB which were then logged.

The Housing Director reported that residents who had smartphones were assisted with downloading and using the app but unfortunately, housing only had access to one noise recording machine to lend to tenants who did not have a smartphone. The Chairman thought this was unacceptable and that funds should be identified to purchase at least one other machine. The Housing Director reported that this was an internal decision but she was aware that Environmental Health were purchasing some new machines and she would look into this matter.

Councillor Jeal highlighted the number of complaints he had received recently regarding damp issues and that tenants must be reminded of the need to open windows to allow fresh air to circulate to combat damp. Councillor Candon agreed with Councillor Jeal that damp complaints were rising.

Councillor Wainwright reported that he was unaware that a noise reporting app existed and it would be prudent if members were informed of apps and how tenants could download them moving forwards.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the report.

11 COUNCIL HOMES PROGRAMME JULY

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

The Housing Delivery Manager reported the Council's approach to the development of infill sites through the Council Homes programme and sought approval for the draw

down of expenditure to be incurred in the delivery of the new Council Home schemes at Charter Close, Gorleston and The Close, Bradwell as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee:-

- (i) Note the report, progress to date and the forthcoming workshop on infill sites; and
- (ii) Approve the development of the sites at Charter Close and The Close and the expenditure as set out in the confidential appendix.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Flaxman-Taylor reported that she had attended a meeting of the Health & Wellbeing Board where Jessamy Hayes had announced a new specialist housing plan for Independent Living which had a national funding pot of £29 million and she requested that officers look to set up a scheme in the Borough to access some of this funding to support the over 55's population. The Housing Delivery Manager reported that she was in regular contact with Jessamy Hayes and the funding pot was on her radar.

13 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.

14 COUNCIL HOMES PROGRAMME CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX (Confidential Minute on this Item)

The meeting ended at: 20:30

PRESENT:

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

Mrs P Boyce (Strategic Director), Mrs N Turner (Housing Director), Mr J Gibbs (Tenancy Services Manager), Mrs D Patterson (HRA Service Accountant), Mrs C Spooner (Housing

Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer), Ms C Wilkins (Housing Delivery Manager) & Mrs C Webb (Executive Services Officer).