

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 18 January 2018 at 18:30

PRESENT:

Councillor Grant (in the Chair); Councillors Bensly, Bird, Cutting, M Coleman, Pratt, Flaxman-Taylor, Walch, Wainwright & Williamson.

Councillor Jeal attended as a substitute for Councillor Waters-Bunn.

Councillor Plant attended as a substitute for Councillor Mavroudis.

Mrs J Beck (Head of Property & Asset Management), Mr T Chaplin (Interim Deputy Head of Housing), Mrs V George (Head of Housing), Mrs D Lee (HRA Service Accountant), Ms H Notcutt (Community Development Manager), Mr A Moore (Development Officer), Ms K Sly (Section 151 Officer), Mr N Shaw (Strategic Director) and Mrs C Webb (Member Services Officer).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hacon, Mavroudis & Waters-Bunn.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jeal declared a Pecuniary Interest in Item number 8, and in accordance with the Council's Constitution, left the room whilst the matter was dealt with.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2017 were confirmed.

4 MATTERS ARISING

(i) With regard to minute number 4, a Member asked whether a response to the Letter of Intent had been received. The Community Development Manager reported that Great Yarmouth Football Club had contacted the Council indicating that they were agreeable to attend a meeting. Advice would be sought from nplaw prior to organising a meeting.

(ii) With regard to minute number 8, A Member asked for details regarding the number of properties affected by damp and mould growth on a ward by ward basis. The Head of Property and Asset Management reported that East Flegg had 9, West Flegg 6, Central & Northgate 1, Nelson 9, Southtown & Cobholm 1, Bradwell North 6, Claydon 27, Magdalen 4, and Bradwell South & Hopton 7 properties.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and considered the updated Forward Plan which included the addition of Public Space Protection Orders which was circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the Forward Plan.

6 MIDDLEGATE ESTATE REGENERATION FEASIBILITY

The Committee received and considered the report from the Development Manager.

The report gave Members an update on progress to date of the Middlegate estate Regeneration Feasibility Study.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee approve the appointment of ARK Housing Consultancy to undertake the masterplanning work in relation to the Middlegate Estate Feasibility Study.

7 GREAT YARMOUTH HOUSING STRATEGY 2018-2022

Members received and considered the Housing Strategy for 2018-2022.

The Housing Strategy identified four strategic objectives to meet current and future housing requirements in Great Yarmouth:

- **New Homes** - ensuring there are enough good quality new homes
- **Our Homes** - improving the quality and use of the Council's housing stock
- **Decent Homes** - providing a good mix of decent homes across all tenures
- **Healthy Homes** - meeting the needs of vulnerable households.

The strategy expands on the four key priorities which highlighted our ambition and the Council's approach to delivery. An action plan has been formulated identifying the key actions required to deliver the strategy. The action plan had been developed through an Officer Working Group to identify specific lead officers who would be responsible for those actions and progress against the action plan would be reported twice a year to Committee.

This ambitious strategy would require private and public stakeholders to work in partnership to make it happen. Local community engagement on the strategic aims would be fundamental to its success, particularly, with tenants in relation to "Our Homes".

A Member suggested that the Tenant's Forum should be re-established. The Strategic Director reported that it was imperative that the Council developed a comprehensive understanding of tenant views and aspirations.

Members also flagged concerns regarding the lack of affordable homes and good quality rental properties in the Borough. Members also asked for confirmation of funding available to alleviate homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered and agreed the strategic aims of the Borough's new Housing Strategy for 2018-2022.

8 HRA BUDGET UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report from the Section 151 Officer.

The Section 151 Officer reported the salient areas of the HRA budget 2018/19 to 2022/23, HRA Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2022/23, HRA Rent and Service Charge Proposal 2018 to 2019 and the Revised HRA Revenue and Capital Forecasts for 2017 to 2018.

A Member reported that the increase in charges for the Digital TV Aerials of RPI + 2% was inappropriate to be passed on to tenants as the maintenance company provided a very poor service to tenants. The Head of Property & Asset Management reported that, unfortunately, the Council had entered into a very long maintenance contract and had discussed the merits of breaking the contract with nplaw but had been advised that this would prove very costly.

The Leader of the Council reported that if the company were not providing the service which was laid out in the contract, that it should be challenged. A Member requested that a report be presented to the Committee within the next 12 months, to allow the Council to procure information on the contract delivery and possible legal challenge.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agree and recommend to Full Council:

- (i) To note the reduction in rents of 1%, as set out in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016,
- (ii) Review and recommend the revenue and capital budget estimates 2018-19 to 2022-23,
- (iii) Recommend the proposed Fees and Charges for 2018-19;and
- (iv) Review the revised forecast for 2017-18.

9 VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report from the Community Development Manager.

The report provided information on delivery and outcomes of one of the four commissioned voluntary and community sector services. The report gave the position at month nine and followed on from the Committee resolution to undertake a Quarter 3 review before making a decision on making an award a further one year funding to the grant recipient, subject to satisfactory end of year performance and Council approval of the 2018/19 budgets.

The organisation was commissioned to deliver on one thematic area; Employment & Skills. Overall, and following a liaison meeting with management, it had been determined that since the 6 month monitoring point, there was evidence to demonstrate that the areas highlighted as requiring attention had all now been instigated, contributing to an improved use of funds to deliver the support services as set out in their original tender.

The Strategic Director reported that the Community Grant Working Group which included elected members should be reconvened as a matter of urgency to determine the future grant allocation process for 2019/20 onwards.

Members were concerned that First Move Furnish Aid would be reviewed on a three monthly basis which would involve a substantial amount of additional work for a charitable organisation to undertake. Members requested, that at the discretion of the Community Development Manager, FMFA be reviewed after 6 months, if their review in March proved satisfactory.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agree:-

(i) That, subject to Council approval of the 2018/19 budgets, funding for First Move Furnish Aid be agreed for a further one year, with six monthly reviews to ensure continual progress was made and targets were being achieved.

(ii) That, during 2018, the Community Grant Working Group, including Members, be reconvened to determine the future grant allocation process for 2019/20 onwards.

10 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT CAPITAL SPEND

The Committee received and considered the report from the Head of Housing.

The report sets out the capital finance position of the Disabled Facilities Grant Fund. It identified that, at current demand, the fund would overspend by the end of the financial year by approximately £77,000 and sets out the options for addressing this issue.

The Head of Housing reported that Option 2 and a virement of £80k from the Homes for Health Capital budget was recommended for approval by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agree Option 2 and approve a virement of £80,000 from the Homes for Health Capital budget.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

12 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

13 CONFIDENTIAL MIDDLEGATE ESTATE REGENERATION FEASIBILITY - APPENDIX 4

The meeting ended at: 20:30