

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE

Minutes and report to Council of the meeting of the Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Station Road East, Oxted on the 21 June 2022 at 7:30pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Pursehouse (Chair), Lockwood (Vice-Chair), Evans, Gaffney, Hammond, Montgomery, Robinson, Shiner, Stamp, Swann and O'Driscoll (Substitute) (In place of Groves)

PRESENT (Virtually): Councillor Groves

ALSO PRESENT (Virtually): Councillors Allen and Moore.

34. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2022

The minutes were approved and signed as a correct record.

35. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MAY 2022

The minutes were approved and signed as a correct record.

36. COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME - WARREN LANE / THE DEPOT

The Committee received a report seeking approval for a potential new scheme at the Warren Lane depot site, Hurst Green. The scheme would involve the re-designing of the existing site to rationalise it and free up approximately half it to develop up to 22 homes for families on the Council's housing register.

Officers confirmed that the site is used by Council officers and contractors, and that they would work closely with colleagues to ensure there would be no impact on services. Residents and Ward Members had been informed and a public consultation was planned.

In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed that:

- If phase 2 development were to take place, these dwellings would also be for families on the Council's housing register.
- In relation to recommendation B, the effect of appropriation was to remove the threat of an injunction where the proposed development may impact on third-party rights, including any third party rights which are currently unknown.
- The £80,000 sought for the project would cover the whole site up to planning pre-application advice. While re-designing the depot, the consideration of the functions moving to another location and the remaining area of the site used for housing as phase 2 will be considered. The re-provision of office space as a modular, moveable building will be looked at. The re-routing of the public sewer will avoid re-routing into the area of phase 2 housing development. These costs would come out of a full budget, if approved, not the initial £80,000.

- Drainage consultants would be appointed to provide expert advice on flood mitigation.
- If offices could not be reallocated on the site, staff would be moved into the Council offices.
- The public consultation would be in relation to phase 1 of the project only.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. Officers prepare proposals for and seek pre-application planning advice for the redevelopment of part of the Warren Lane depot site for up to 22 new affordable dwellings; the rationalisation of the depot site
- B. A budget of £80,000 be approved to cover the following pre-application elements:
 - the appointment of an architect, Employer’s Agent and other specialist consultants and surveyors to act for, or advise, the Council; and
 - commissioning any necessary surveys.
- C. Officers be authorised to commence the process of appropriating the land for planning purposes in accordance with Section 122 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

37. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Committee received a report which outlined details of a proposed new Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy. The policy, which reflected the current priorities of the Council and guidance issued in March 2022, would replace the existing Home Adaption and Improvement Policy once approved. Members were invited to comment on the draft policy and to decide if they wished to submit the policy to a period of public consultation before the final version of the Policy was considered by the Committee in September.

Officers explained that the proposed policy would:

- enable the Council to offer broader grants within the agreed budget envelope, including support for those who have health issues or disabilities exacerbated by lack of heating on the advice of a medical professional or occupational therapist
- include a proposal to negotiate a financial contribution from Housing Associations towards the cost of adaptations to their properties
- provide greater transparency on decision making and using the Council’s Better Care Fund allocation to support Surrey County Council’s Community Equipment Service and the Council’s Handyperson Service
- provide a robust means of administering assistance for any future increase to Disabled Facilities Grants from the Government.

Members considered the report and draft policy and made the following comments:

- public consultation on the new policy was welcomed

- negotiations with Housing Associations was welcomed, but that there should be consideration around the proposed amounts they would be asked to contribute to adaptations within their properties
- concern around any potential for there to be reduction in the Handyperson Service should discretionary grant funding stop being available. Officers confirmed that the future operating model of the Handyperson service is to be considered as part of the Housing service reviews in accordance with the Future Tandridge Programme
- the Winter Warmth Grant should be referred to as a loan to provide clarity to those applying for it that it must be repaid
- consideration be given to include Alzheimer's and dementia in the list of medical conditions that qualify for Winter Warmth assistance
- there should be a process for accelerated action in urgent circumstances
- the consultation with members be extended to all Members of the Council.

It was confirmed that officers would consider all comments received from Members and decide on incorporating suggestions into the policy. There would be further discussion with individual members if necessary.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. Members be invited to provide feedback on the proposed policy between the 21st June and 8th July 2022;
- B. The draft Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy be subject to a period of public consultation;
- C. Subject to the consideration and appropriate inclusion of Member comments received by the 8th July 2022, the publication of the draft Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy for public consultation be approved.

38. TENANTS INCENTIVE SCHEME

The Committee considered a report which proposed amendments to the Tenants Incentive Scheme. The scheme is designed to encourage Council tenants who are under-occupying family sized accommodation to move to lower demand older persons stock. It was recommended that the scheme be revised to consider inflationary increases and changes in relative demand for properties of particular sizes since the last review 15 years ago. This included the extension of eligibility for the scheme to all one-bedroom properties and two-bedroom properties within the Council's permanent housing stock, extending the scheme to tenants of Registered Providers' properties and an increase in grants.

In response to Member questions, it was confirmed that:

- Those moving within Housing Association properties would be eligible for the scheme
- All the grants in the current scheme were £2,000
- Those with a flexible tenancy with less than 2 years left would not be eligible

- If met, the target of 5 under-occupation transfers in the year would be of considerable help to the housing waiting list

RESOLVED – that the amendments to the Transfer Incentive Scheme as set out in paragraphs 16 and 18 to 20 of the report be agreed, namely that with effect from 1st July 2022:

- eligibility for the Scheme will be extended to qualifying assured tenants of Registered Provider (RP) properties in the District providing that the Council has received written confirmation from their landlord that it will be entitled to nominate the new tenant for the resulting vacancy;
- eligibility for the Scheme will be extended to tenants moving to all one bedroom properties and two-bedroom properties within the Council's permanent housing stock;
- the fixed grant amount payable to applicants transferring under the Scheme a property be increased as follows:
 - a £5,000 incentive grant for tenants moving to one-bedroom or bedsit accommodation; or
 - a £2,000 incentive grant for tenants moving to a two-bedroom property;
- budgetary provision for the scheme for 2022/23 be increased from £15,000 to £25,000.

39. HOUSING COMMITTEE QUARTER 4 2021/22 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members were presented with an analysis of progress against the Committee's key performance indicators (KPIs), together with an updated risk register for the fourth quarter of 2021/22 and an update on the Council's House Building programme. Officers explained that five of the KPIs had not been met. Narratives were provided in appendix A to the report outlining the reasons for these KPIs not meeting target.

In response to Member's questions, it was confirmed that:

- The reconciliation issues between the Council's housing management system and its finance system had been resolved. Data was provided in the report for Q4. Work needed to be completed to extract data for Q2 and Q3. This would be circulated to the Committee by mid-July.
- Orchard were conducting a health check of the system. The risk H1 was still regarded as high whilst past Quarters were to be reconciled but it was expected this would be reduced following conclusion of the health check.
- The Council were addressing KPI HO5 Number of People in Urgent Need on the Housing Register through the Housing Strategy and the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Updates were brought to the Committee throughout the year.
- The situation with the Council's gas contract had not changed since it was last reported to Committee in March.
- In relation to HO10A and HO10B, a survey was posted to residents following the completion of responsive repairs. There was a low response rate and consideration

would be given to despatching this electronically following the completion of the Orchard health check.

RESOLVED – that the Quarter 4 2021-2022 performance and risks for the Housing Committee be noted.

40. URGENT BUSINESS - GARAGE IN ALEXANDRA ROAD, WARLINGHAM

A report in respect of the item, recommending the sale of the leasehold of the garage, had been circulated in writing to the Committee prior to the meeting. The Chairman considered it necessary for the Committee to receive the item in view of the progress made towards selling the leasehold and the need for the matter to be determined by Full Council in accordance with the delegation arrangements within the Constitution.

The Committee resolved to move into 'Part 2' for this urgent item of business in accordance with Paragraph 3 (information relating to financial or business affairs) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and as the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Committee discussed the details of the proposed disposal.

COUNCIL DECISION
(subject to ratification by Council)

RECOMMENDED – that the garage property is disposed of on such terms as the Executive Head of Communities agrees, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Housing Committee.

Rising 8.52 pm