

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE

Minutes and report to Council of the meeting of the Committee held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices on the 23 November 2023 at 7:30pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Damesick (Vice-Chair), Evans, Chris Farr, Gaffney, Groves, Hammond, O'Riordan, Pursehouse (Chair) and Shiner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Sue Farr, Alun Jones and Windsor

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors O'Driscoll and Robinson

166. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 14 SEPTEMBER 2023

The minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

167. COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME – WOLFS WOOD – BUDGET

The Committee considered a report for a revised budget for the Wolfs Wood Scheme of the Council House Building Programme.

The original budget was approved by the Committee in March 2021. However lack of resources in the housing development and planning teams, as well as the liquidation of two of the Council's existing building contractors had delayed the programme and increased costs. Planning approval for the scheme was granted in June 2023 and the main construction contract had been put to tender.

The economic impacts of global events had pushed up construction costs. Officers had considered going back to the market, but as it remained unreliable, there was no guarantee of an improved position. The project was still expected to perform with the increased budget.

The possibility of charging social rents, as opposed to affordable rents was now less likely, even with a grant from Homes England, due to increased costs.

The successful contractor was expected to undertake a value engineering exercise and identify savings through the detailed design process. This could result in a reduction against the submitted tender price. A fixed price contract meant the price would not increase.

In response to Member questions, Officers explained that:

- The necessary surveys to inform the tender had been completed. The tenders received reflected recent global events and were therefore relied upon as much as Officers could.
- The approach to this scheme had been adapted to build in larger contingencies.

RESOLVED – a revised budget of £4.4m for the redevelopment of Wolfs Wood in Hurst Green, be approved.

168. COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME – NEW SCHEME - NOVEMBER 2023

A report was submitted asking Members to approve an initial budget of £50k to enable officers to prepare detailed proposals for a mix of 1, 2 and 3-bedroom houses and flats for affordable rent and seek pre-planning advice for Kentwyns Rise, South Nutfield.

Kentwyns Rise was a former sheltered housing scheme comprising of 31 dwellings. The properties required significant improvements and had been identified by community surveyors as nearing the end of their useful life.

The potential for re-modelling the existing dwellings had been ruled out as being too costly and the design would be restricted by the building's current envelope.

Replacing the properties with modern, well insulated buildings was identified as a better and more cost-effective approach for the Council, and allowed for the provision of much needed family sized accommodation. Feasibility studies indicated that 23 new dwellings could be accommodated on the land with a significant increase in the number of bed spaces.

Residents of Kentwyns Rise had been made aware of the plans, had met with Housing Development Managers and, subject to approval, would be formally consulted under s.105 of the Housing Act. Residents would become eligible for re-housing in priority Band A and receive the associated statutory home loss payment when they moved.

The decant of existing residents was estimated to take around two years. Due to the timescales existing residents could not be given the option to return to the new development.

In response to Member questions Officers explained that there would be a roughly even split between 2 and 3 bedroom properties with only a small number of 1 bedroom properties being provided. Officers also confirmed that the properties would all be for rent.

Officers had amended recommendation A to specify the required budget for the preparation of redevelopment proposals.

RESOLVED – that:

- A) Officers prepare detailed proposals for the redevelopment of Kentwyns Rise, South Nutfield for a mix of 1,2 and 3-bedroom houses and flats for affordable rent and seek pre-planning advice to develop the site, with a budget of £50k;
- B) approval be given to proceed with the appointment of an architect, Employer's Agent and other specialist consultants and surveyors to act for, or advise the Council and the commissioning of necessary reports all subject to the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- C) work begin to rehouse residents displaced by the redevelopment and commence this following the Committee's decision, including the payment of compensation where eligible;
- D) appropriate notices to be served on tenants at the earliest opportunity to preclude the possibility of the Right to Buy; and

- E) authority be given for Officers to commence the process of appropriating the land from housing to planning purposes in accordance with Section 122 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

169. STAFFORD ROAD – CAR PARK

The Committee received a report on the potential development of a car park to the rear of block 224-270 Stafford Road, Caterham. Concerns had been raised by residents regarding the number of vehicles parked on the highway in front of 224-270 Stafford Road and the impact of this on road users.

Discussions had been held with Surrey County Council about reduced speed limits, traffic calming measures and allocated parking spaces, but had not provided a solution to resident concerns. A feasibility study had been undertaken to determine whether parking could be provided at the rear of the properties and how passing places could be provided on the highway.

The report anticipated a budget of £350k for the scheme, with a £50k contingency to provide a maximum of 15 parking bays. This budget would be achieved through increased borrowing from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme. The costs were subject to a formal procurement process.

Members debated the proposal and made the following points:

- Consideration should be given to asking Surrey County Council to do a full highway assessment. There was a lack of confidence that the space that would be freed up would result in an equivalent reduction in the number of parked cars. The County's solution to highway safety issues would likely lead to a loss of parking spaces.
- Consideration should be given to submitting a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bid to fund the car park. The feasibility of this would need to be considered by Officers.
- Concerns from residents about anti-social behaviour, security of the potential car park and paying for its use.
- Issues around the use of the car park during the winter months due to snow and ice and the steep gradient of the access road.

Officers explained that:

- Members would need to consider the use of a compulsory purchase order if the gardens of the properties could not be obtained on a voluntary basis from the residents.
- The proposed budget could be alternatively used as part of the Council House Building Programme, the maintenance of the existing housing stock and working towards meeting net zero targets. It was estimated the annual repayment for the loan would be in the region of £22k.
- Additional security measures, for example, barriers or CCTV, would be needed as part of the development
- Parking charges currently existed at some, but not all, Council development schemes. Officers would be looking into parking more widely across the Council's housing stock.

- If the car park was developed, Surrey County Council have indicated they would use the spare space to develop passing places on the highway.

Upon being put to the vote, recommendation A was not agreed.

Councillor Gaffney proposed the following additional recommendation and Councillor Evans seconded.

'Officers review opportunities for a car club scheme on Stafford Road garages, and return to the relevant committee with a report.'

This was agreed.

RESOLVED – that

- A) Members decline the proposals to develop a car park at Stafford Road and the associated budget for the work and, Officers to revert back to Surrey County Council regarding alternative options for traffic and parking measures on the highway.
- B) Officers review opportunities for a car club scheme on Stafford Road garages, and return to the relevant Committee with a report.

170. QUARTER 2 2023/24 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - HOUSING COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report outlining the Quarter 2 2023/24 performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Two of the KPIs had not been met; number of households living in temporary accommodation, and number of people in 'urgent need' on the Housing Register. Appendix A to the report provided explanation as to why.

The Committee also received the Housing Risk Register at appendix B to the report which included the mitigating actions taken against the identified risks and risks that had been closed.

The Quarter 2 position with regard to the Council House Building Programme was outlined in appendix C to the report.

Officers provided the following information in response to Member questions on the two KPIs that had not been met:

- These were not met as a result of a lack of supply of affordable housing. A number of new builds would be completed as part of the Council House Building Programme in 2023/24 and in early 2024/25, and these would help improve the position.
- The reasons for the increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation was due to the cost of living, increasing private rents and a lack of private accommodation that was affordable.

As the Council did not have control over these aspects, Officers confirmed they'd be reviewing whether they should be measured as KPIs or whether they should be reported to Members for monitoring purposes only. Officers would work with Members and report back to the Committee.

RESOLVED – that the Quarter 2 2023/24 performance and risks for the Housing Committee be noted.

171. QUARTER 2 2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING - HOUSING COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report outlining the financial position of the Revenue and Capital budgets for the Committee, including the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), as of Quarter 2 2023/24.

The report set out an outturn variance of £24k for the Housing General Fund. This was an increase of £9k on Quarter 1, mainly due to additional work through the Home Improvement Agency contract. There was no change to the savings since Quarter 1, with £60k of £150k of savings having been delivered.

In the HRA, a forecast overspend of £97k was reported. This was an increase of £37k on Quarter 1, mainly due to additional salary costs and service costs, including an increase in cost of void properties for Council Tax and a new fraud contract with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council. An overspend of £60k due to a software upgrade had been reported at Quarter 1.

The Housing General Fund Capital Budget related to Disability Facilities Grants. The total capital requirement for 2023/24 had been re-set at £503k in Quarter 1, with £139k to be carried forward into 2024/25. At Quarter 2, the forecast spend was £420k, with slippage of £83k to be reprofiled into 2024/25.

The total capital requirement for the HRA Capital Programme had re-set at £16,133k in Quarter 1, with £3,862k to be carried forward into 2024/25. At Quarter 2, the total Capital Forecast was £16,031, with a slippage variance of £102k.

In response to a Member question, Officers confirmed that the Orchard upgrades were nearing completion and would allow Officers to better manage the system, the budget, forecast spend and the cyclical and planned maintenance programmes.

RESOLVED – that the that the Committee's forecast Revenue and Capital budget positions as at Quarter 2 / M6 (September) 2023/24 be noted.

172. COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME – PROPOSED LAND ACQUISITION

The Committee resolved to move into private session for this item in accordance with paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and because the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

A report seeking approval for a budget of £45k and approval to proceed with the process of appropriating the land in question was presented. The budget would allow Officers to prepare proposals for and seek pre-planning application advice for the development of affordable housing on the land, following acquisition.

RESOLVED – that:

- A) a budget of £45,000 be approved to allow Officers to prepare proposals for and seek pre-application planning advice for the development of the land for up to 13 one and two-bedroom flats.

- B) the appropriation of the land for planning purposes in accordance with Section 122 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, be approved.

Rising 8.57 pm