

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 19 March 2024 at 7:30pm.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Allen and Sue Farr

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Groves

259. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 23 JANUARY 2024

The minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

260. TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES

A report was presented to the Committee outlining responses to the residents survey on statutory Tenant Satisfaction Measures. These measures had been introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing. The responses were to be submitted to the Regulator from April 2024.

Residents' views were sought using a mixture of postal, online and telephone surveys. All Council tenants were invited to take part. 721 responses were received, a response rate of 28%. The survey would take place annually, with all tenants invited to respond.

Officers explained that, overall, the survey showed good levels of satisfaction with the services provided by the Council's housing service. The main areas identified for improvement included:

- keeping properties in good repair and ensuring repairs were done within timeframes.
- ensuring residents were better informed if there was a delay to acquiring resources or material shortages.
- the cleaning and maintenance services.
- the approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB) including visibility of the process and the creation of an online form for reporting.
- ensuring tenants felt listened to through improvements to the complaints process.

In response to a Member question, Officers confirmed that there was a new ASB policy for Housing and a corporate policy was also being developed. These policies would make it easier for residents to report ASB. They would also set out how victims of ASB are to be supported and would ensure that the Council uses the tools it has to deal with ASB effectively.

Members felt the survey gave a useful baseline for identifying improvements, although the figures may be skewed with those residents who had experienced problems more likely to respond. Officers confirmed the Regulator was receiving feedback from housing providers on

the survey. The Council was also looking to issue surveys to residents at the point in time their issue was resolved, to receive more immediate feedback.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the responses provided by tenants in relation to the statutory Tenant Satisfaction Measures in Appendix A of the report be noted.
- B. the Tenant Satisfaction Action Plan as attached in Appendix B of the report be approved.

261. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE ON HRA SITES

A report was submitted to members seeking authority to amend the current grass cutting specification from a cut and collect service on all cuts throughout the cutting season to a cut and collect approach on the first and last cuts. Officers explained benefits would include greater productivity from staff, the generation of less green waste and less environmental impacts.

In response to member questions, Officers explained that:

- current equipment used by the Council has the capability to either adapt to mulch or do so already.
- due to missed cuts last season, strimming has been underway. However, a cut and collect would take place as soon as possible, afterwards cut and mulch would be implemented as set out in the report.
- Operational Services would maintain grass every two weeks, resulting in less green waste on pavements. Provisions would be made by Operational Services for additional cut and collects throughout the year when required. A new contract scheduled to begin in November 2024 would mean new equipment would provide further efficiency in reaching sites more regularly.
- the proposal would be introduced with immediate effect. Officers were working on new specification for a revised resourcing schedule and new equipment, expected to be delivered in November 2024.

RESOLVED – that the Council moves from a cut and collect approach on all cuts throughout the cutting season to a cut and collect approach on the first and last cuts.

262. QUARTER 3 2023/24 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - HOUSING COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report outlining the Quarter 3 2023/24 performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The report also proposed revised KPIs for 2024/25. Three of the KPIs had not been met; average time taken to re-let local authority sheltered housing, 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 report included the Housing Risk Register at appendix B. Mitigating actions that had been taken against the identified risks and risks that had been closed were listed.

The Quarter 3 position with regard to the Council House Building Programme was outlined in appendix C to the report.

Members asked a number of questions, with Officers responding to explain:

- the Council would have 100% of nominations to first lettings at the former Rose and Young site. 75% of subsequent vacancies would be offered to the Council for filling from the housing register.
- the delay to the building of properties at Windmill Close and Auckland Road were as a result of a delay with getting pre-commencement planning conditions discharged. As a result, the contractor had focused on completing properties at Rochester Gardens and Foxacre.
- the new KPI for number of households living in temporary accommodation was set at 30, and Officers felt this was a reasonable target.
- the reason KPI HO2b, average time taken to re-let local authority sheltered housing (days), had been missed was predominantly due to additional work needed to let sheltered accommodation, usually as a result of the requirement to assess the needs of vulnerable residents.

Councillor Hammond proposed, and it was duly seconded, that the target for the average time taken to re-let local authority sheltered housing (days) be amended to 35 days. Upon being put to the vote, this was motion was agreed.

R E S O L V E D – that:

- A. the Quarter 3 2023-2024 performance and risks for the Housing Committee be noted.
- B. with the target for the average time taken to re-let local authority sheltered housing (days) being set to 35 days, the proposed Key Performance Indicators for 2024/25 be agreed.

263. QUARTER 3 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 3 2023/24.

The report set out an outturn variance of £26k for the Housing General Fund. This was an increase of £2k on Quarter 2.

In the HRA, a forecast underspend of £628k was reported. This was an improvement of £725k on Quarter 2, mainly due to additional salary costs, service costs, including releasing electricity and gas unspent budget, and repairs and maintenance.

The Housing General Fund Capital Budget, of £503k, related to Disability Facilities Grants. At Quarter 3, the forecast spend was £488k, with slippage of £83k to be reprofiled into 2024/25.

The total capital requirement for the HRA Capital Programme had been re-set at £16,133k in Quarter 1, with £3,862k to be carried forward into 2024/25. At Quarter 3, the total Capital Forecast was £16,980k.

In response to Member questions, it was confirmed that the energy contract was with a German holding company, and not with Gazprom. The Council received advice on energy contracts, to ensure that it received the best possible price. A new four year contract would be agreed later in 2024. As part of the requirement for net zero, the Council would look at smart thermostats and ensuring properties met EPC rating C. New builds were constructed to operate at net zero.

RESOLVED – that the that the Committee’s forecast Revenue and Capital budget positions as at Quarter 3 / M9 (December) 2023/24 be noted.

264. APPROPRIATION OF LAND FOR COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING

The Committee received a report seeking approval to continue the process of appropriation of the land at the Warren Lane depot and 122 Mill Lane for planning purposes. The Committee had resolved at its meeting on 21 June 2022 that Officers commence the process of appropriating the site.

Officers had completed due diligence and the land had been identified as surplus to requirements. The benefit of the proposed development would significantly outweigh any harm as a result of infringement of third party rights. Consultation had taken place on the appropriation process and Officers had considered responses to ensure that any issue relevant to the appropriation of the site had been considered and the correct statutory process had been followed.

In response to questions from Members, Officers confirmed:

- there had been no matters in the report on title that would prevent development of the site.
- consideration was being given to the accommodation requirements of Council teams currently using the site.
- the planning application had been submitted. The application had taken into account comments from existing residents, and Officers would ensure inconveniences were reduced to a minimum. Access to the site would be through 122 Mill Lane.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the appropriation of the site at the Warren Lane depot and at 122 Mill Lane (as indicated in the relevant plan at Appendix A of the report) (subject to compliance with all necessary legal requirements) in exercise of statutory powers to appropriate for planning purposes, exercising powers under S122 of the Local Government Act for the planning purposes of facilitating redevelopment having regard to the Equalities Impact Assessment, for residential uses pursuant to section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, be approved.
- B. delegated authority be provided to the Director of Resources:
 - i. subject to any necessary statutory consents and procedures, to sign a memorandum stating that the land is appropriated for planning purposes;
 - ii. at the appropriate time, to sign a memorandum stating that the land is appropriated from planning purposes to housing.

265. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND ROUND 3

The Committee considered a report outlining Officer's proposal for DLUHC's Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3. The funding would provide temporary accommodation to ease homelessness pressures and support the Government's humanitarian obligations under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. The scheme would provide funding for a minimum of 2 properties, 1 for temporary accommodation and 1 for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. The Council would receive a minimum grant of £221k per property or a total minimum of £442k. The minimum grant received would be £271k per property if delivered as new builds.

The scheme would run over the next 2 financial years. Officers anticipated it would be possible for more than 2 properties to be secured and would propose that the Council would be prepared to deliver 10 homes under the funding, 8 for temporary accommodation and 2 for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. If approved, the Council would receive a minimum grant of £2.2 million.

A final report to Committee would be presented in June 2024, outlining the final figures once DLUHC had considered the Council's proposal. Officers had considered the previous rounds of funding and estimated delivering 10 properties would require a £3.5 million budget, which would result in a cost to the Council of £1.3 million or £129k per property.

Officers explained that the scheme represented good value for money and asked Members to recommend that Full Council approve a Capital Programme Budget of £3.5 million funded by £2.2 million in grant.

Members believed this scheme would be a good opportunity for the Council and were pleased it would help alleviate the pressure on the housing situation.

In response to member questions, Officers explained that DLUHC had confirmed that if the temporary housing became surplus to requirement, the properties would become available for general need.

RESOLVED – that:

- A) the submission of a validation form to DLUHC by 5pm on Thursday 28th March to confirm that the Council is willing and able to participate in the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 scheme be approved.
- B) subject to Full Council approval of a capital programme budget of £3.5m, Members approve that the Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) and/or the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer agree to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) no later than 31st May 2024.
- C) Officers to indicate that the Council can provide accommodation in excess of the indicative allocation and, should more funding become available, the Director of Resources and the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Group Leaders is authorised to amend the MOU accordingly.

RECOMMENDED – that:

- D) Full Council approve a capital programme budget of £3.5m, funded by £1.3m of borrowing and £2.2m grant.

266. AUTHORITY TO PROCURE – VOIDS CONTRACT

A report was presented to the Committee seeking approval to procure a contract with external providers to deliver a Voids Service for three years, through an open tender process for Council owned properties. The voids process ensured properties were re-let in a safe condition.

Members expressed the view that, whilst the price of the contract was important, the quality of service was also important. Officers explained that the ratio for awarding the contract had not concluded but it would take into account cost, quality and social value. The contractor would be under strict timeframes to ensure the KPIs were met.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. Officers be authorised to commence a procurement exercise and subsequently award a contract for the delivery of void repairs and associated works.
- B. authority be delegated to the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Housing Committee, to award the contract to the most economically advantageous tenderer.
- C. the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to enter into all necessary agreements with the preferred contractor to provide a Voids service for the councils housing stock as set out in resolution A.
- D. authority be delegated to the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer to execute and enter into all necessary contractual agreements.

267. AUTHORITY TO PROCURE – CLEANING CONTRACT

The Committee consider a report seeking approval to procure a contract for the cleaning of communal areas at flats and sheltered housing sites, public conveniences, Queens Park and Warren Lane depots, Queens Park pavilion and Valley Sports Park, and the Council offices. The current contracted would end on 30 September 2024.

It was proposed to procure a contractor from an existing framework on a 3 + 2 year contract. A mini-competition would be undertaken to achieve competitive pricing. Quality and social value would also be considered during the scoring process.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the procurement of a single contract for the cleaning of communal areas at flats and sheltered housing sites, public conveniences, Warren Lane and Queens Park Depots, Queens Park Pavilion, Valley Sports Park and the Council offices in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders and the Public Contract Regulations 2015, be approved.
- B. delegated authority be granted to the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee to award the contract to the most economically advantageous tenderer.
- C. the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to enter into all necessary agreements with the preferred contractor to provide a building cleaning service within the common and communal areas of the councils housing stock and other areas as set out in resolution A.

- D. delegated authority be granted to the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer to execute and enter into all necessary contractual agreements.

268. MEADOWSIDE PITCH FEES – DECISION TAKEN UNDER URGENCY POWERS

The Committee received a report outlining an urgent decision that had been taken under Standing Order 35. At the meeting of the Committee on 23 January 2024, the proposal to increase pitch fees and garage rents at Meadowside Park by 7.7% was agreed. However, an Act had been passed in 2023 which switched the cap these items could be raised by from RPI to CPI. The urgent decision was to reflect this legislation and limit the pitch fees to the latest CPI available (4%) on 3 March 2024.

Officers explained that the garage rent increase would remain at 7.7%. There would be no impact on the improvement work scheduled at Meadowside in 2024/25.

In response to Member questions, Officers explained that steps had been put in place during the budget setting process to ensure this issue didn't arise in the future. The budget would be set to manage the impact of CPI increases, as the exact increase would not be known until after the budget had been set.

RESOLVED – that the decision made to limit the pitch fees to the latest CPI available on 3 March 2024 at Meadowside Park under the Council's urgency powers be ratified.

269. NEW SCHEME - BUDGET APPROVAL

The press and public were excluded from this item in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) on the grounds that:

- (i) the item involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act; and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Committee received a report which sought approval for a budget in order for Officers to prepare proposals for and seek pre-planning application advice for an affordable housing development on a site which the Council was in the process of purchasing. Approval was also sought to commence the process of appropriating the land for planning purposes once it had been purchased.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. subject to acquisition of the site, Officers prepare proposals for and seek pre-application planning advice for the development of the site for up to 20 new affordable dwellings; and to approve a budget for the pre-application stage of £75,000. This budget will cover the appointment of an architect, employers agent and other specialist consultants and surveyors to act for, or advise, the Council and the commissioning of necessary reports. These are necessary to take the proposal to pre-application advice stage, all subject to the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

- B. the case of recommendation A, authority also be given for Officers to commence the process of appropriating the land for planning purposes once it has purchased the site in accordance with Section 122 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Rising 8.36 pm