

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 20 June 2023 at 7:30pm.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Windsor and Allen

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Groves

39. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 MARCH 2023

The minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

40. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 25 MAY 2023

The minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

41. TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee received a report recommending the adoption of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy. The Strategy had been subject to public consultation following approval to consult in January 2023.

Officers explained that the Strategy would provide an additional mechanism for continuous service improvements, with the aim of increasing tenant and leaseholder satisfaction. It would set out a range of methods to improve meaningful engagement and introduce challenging targets against which delivery can be measured.

Officers explained that, as there had only been 9 responses to the consultation, a survey of tenants had been undertaken to ensure up-to-date contact details were held. The survey also sought to understand tenants' engagement preferences. 400 responses had been received to the survey.

Political Groups would be approached to nominate a representative to participate in the Engagement Steering Group.

Members expressed their support for the proposals and welcomed the opportunity to ensure elected representatives' views were heard through the Engagement Steering Group.

RESOLVED that –

- A) the Committee adopt, on behalf of the Council, the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- B) Each political group be approached to nominate a representative to attend and participate in the Engagement Steering Group.

42. UPDATE: AIDS AND ADAPTIONS IN COUNCIL HOMES POLICY

A report was submitted recommending minor changes to the Aids and Adaptions in Council Homes Policy. The Policy was adopted in its current form in November 2020. Members had requested that the Policy was reviewed by Officers post implementation to ensure the Policy continued to enable the Council to fulfil its duties towards vulnerable and disabled people effectively. The purpose of the recommended changes was to better manage tenant's expectations, update job titles and ensure the text in the policy explained clearly how the Council makes best use of Council housing stock.

RESOLVED – that the minor amendments in the Aids and Adaptions in Council Homes Policy put forward be agreed.

43. 2022/23 HOUSING COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report outlining the Quarter 4 2022/23 performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). 5 of the KPIs had not been met, with appendix A to the report providing explanation as to why. The Committee also received the Housing Risk Register which included the mitigating actions taken against the identified risks.

The report set out a list of tenant satisfaction measures which the Council would collate in order to provide information to tenants to support effective scrutiny by them of the Council's performance as a landlord in managing their homes and neighbourhoods.

Following questions from Members, Officers provided information on two closed risks:

- A very high risk which had related to a potential overspend on housing repairs, due to a technical issue with two Council systems, had been removed following resolution of the issue.
- A medium risk that the Council's Gazprom energy contract would be terminated. This had been closed as ownership of Gazprom had been disconnected from the Russian state. The contract would be re-procured when it ceased in September 2024.

In response to a question on actions the Council was taking to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation, Officers explained they were working with various partners to deliver temporary accommodation. This included working with private landlords through the Private Sector Access Scheme. Collaboratively work was also being undertaken with other Districts and Boroughs in Surrey to resolve the issue across the County. It was noted that demand for temporary accommodation was up but there was a low supply of affordable accommodation and an insufficient supply of private rented accommodation within the District.

RESOLVED – that:

- A) the Quarter 4 2022-2023 performance and risks for the Housing Committee be noted.
- B) the collection of the additional performance indicators highlighted in Appendix C to the report be noted.

44. 2023/24 COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME UPDATE

A report was submitted to the Committee to provide an overview of the Council's house building programme. This included specific scheme updates, information on the programme budget, targets and medium and high risks. The update also provided information about the purchase of properties under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) and how the Council was working with other affordable housing partners to deliver affordable housing. Officers explained that the Council was seeking to become an Investment Partner of Homes England to qualify for opportunities to bid for grants for individual schemes and the Committee would be updated as the application was progressed.

In response to Member questions, Officers confirmed:

- Consideration had been given to two stage contracts or contracts with fluctuation clauses in response to the increase in material and labour costs. Two stage contracts were considered too open ended for the scale of schemes the Council was developing but this option would be kept under review. Fluctuation clauses in contracts may be necessary but would be minimised as much as possible. Contingencies within schemes had been increased and would be used to cover additional costs under fluctuation provisions.
- The risk in relation to re-tendering the Bronzeoak contract and a lack of interest from contractors, had been identified as a result of the scheme being part way through development. This could create risks for new contractors and make tendering less attractive. Early discussions were underway with a firm which employed Claritas staff who had knowledge and experience of the site and scheme which would be beneficial.
- There had been some delays with discharging planning conditions on some sites. To mitigate this risk, Officers would seek to resolve conditions through engagement with Planning whilst the planning application was being considered.

RESOLVED – that the contents of the report be noted.

45. 2022/23 BUDGET OUTTURN - HOUSING COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report which set out the full-year outturn of the Committee's 2022/23 General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme budgets.

The full-year Revenue outturn was a net spend of £462k against the budget of £476k, giving a full-year underspend of £14k. This was an improvement of £22k since the last report at Quarter 3. The key areas resulting in the change included a £80k improvement from Quarter 3 in Housing Benefit, due to Government grant money being sufficient to meet expenditure, and an improvement in Government Grant funding for Syrian & Afghan resettlement. There was an in-quarter deterioration relating to salaries and homelessness costs increasing. Full year savings of £76k had been delivered, against a target of £80k.

The HRA outturn was balanced in line with the budget. This included a transfer into reserves of £503k. The key drivers for the transfer into reserves was an increase in income due to rechargeable work and an interest rate increase on HRA balances. There was also an in-quarter salaries reduction of £81k.

In terms of the Capital Budget there was a net underspend of £4,574k. £139k of the underspend related to changed phasing in the Disabled Facilities Grant in the General Fund. A report to the Strategy & Resources Committee would recommend a carry forward of this

underspend into 2023/24. The £4,435k underspend in the HRA Capital Programme related to a housing stock underspend and a housing development net underspend which would also be included in a carry-forward proposal to the Strategy & Resources Committee.

RESOLVED – that the Committee's Revenue and Capital Outturn positions as at Quarter 4 / M12 (March) 2023 be noted.

46. HOUSING SERVICES STRUCTURE

As part of the Future Tandridge Programme, a review of the Housing staffing structure had been undertaken which resulted in the implementation of a new structure and a proposal put forward to integrate the Community Surveyor team within the Housing service. New role profiles had been written with an emphasis on customer service and performance management. A Housing Leadership Team had been formed to support the continued improvement of the service and to ensure the service was delivered in accordance with the Corporate Plan, the Housing Delivery Service Plan, key performance indicators and legislation.

In response to Member questions, Officers confirmed:

- The new structure gave clarity of responsibilities which had previously been blurred. There had been several changes in terms of staff responsibilities.
- The proposal to integrate the Community Surveyor team into Housing was because a significant majority of their work related to housing assets. The team would retain responsibility for wider Council assets, predominantly compliance and health and safety within pavilions and public conveniences. A new structure for the team would be introduced following staff consultation.

RESOLVED that –

- A) the new Housing Services structure as set out in appendix A to the report be noted.
- B) it be recommended to the next Strategy and Resources Committee that the Community Surveying team be integrated into the Housing Services structure.

Rising 8.15 pm