

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

3 February 2016

Attendance:

Councillors:

Horrill (Chairman) (P)

Byrnes

Miller (P)

Deputy Members

Councillor Read (Deputy Member for Councillor Byrnes)

Other invited Councillors:

J Berry (P)

Scott (P)

Dibden (P)

Tait (P)

Izard (P)

Thacker

TACT representatives:

Mr D Chafe (P)

Mr D Light (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Hutchison

1. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors J Berry and Scott declared disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of Report CAB2761(HSG) due to them both being Council tenants. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, they both remained in the room and spoke under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Standards Committee to participate in all matters related to the Council house rent reduction.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 3 February 2016, less exempt minute, be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Three people spoke regarding CAB2676(HSG) and their comments are summarised under the relevant agenda item below.

4. **AUTHORISATION TO PROGRESS AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEME: GREENHILL TERRACE, GREENHILL ROAD, WINCHESTER**
(Report CAB2767(HSG) refers)

Three people spoke during public participation regarding this item and their comments are summarised below.

Peter Butcher queried figures presented in the Report with regard to the net loss of parking spaces available for existing residents of Greenhill Terrace. He calculated this to be much higher (17 spaces) and he drew Members' attention that parking was already in high demand here from visitors and from users of the allotments. In addition, the additional four spaces to be created for the new homes would not be enough, especially as there might be at least two cars per family plus visitors. Mr Butcher also highlighted the existing narrow access and egress to the Terrace, with poor visibility splays and insufficient turning space that often required hazardous three point turns. In summary, further vehicular and pedestrian movements at this location could exacerbate the existing road safety hazards.

Vanessa Young drew the Committee's attention to various health and safety issues with regard to the proposed redevelopment of the garage site at Greenhill Terrace. She highlighted the existing narrow T junction to the Terrace with blind-spots that would make any additional vehicular movements and footfall from the development even more hazardous. The new homes might exacerbate illegal parking, including on bends which would be dangerous. She was concerned about whether emergency vehicles could continue to access the Terrace unhindered by obstruction. Cyclists and skateboarders cut through the terrace, often at speed, and she believed that children would be unable to continue to play safely in the Terrace in future.

Sue Jacobs reported that the Greenhill Terrace and Avenue area was a well established community with a good balance of housing types and facilities, such as allotments. This was currently under threat from development such as that proposed, which she believed was a consequence of the Council being unable to maintain and enforce its policies that required 40% affordable housing on site at larger developments elsewhere.

The Chairman thanked those making deputations to the Committee and explained that the Council's broad principle was to build new homes and that the development proposals being brought forward had already been modified as a consequence of consultation with local residents. The Head of New Homes Delivery outlined in detail the proposals and explained why the Greenhill Terrace site was the preferred option for redevelopment. In summary, a larger comprehensive redevelopment of both sites had been modified to comprise the Greenhill Terrace garages only. This was due to

constraints on the Greenhill Avenue site, which meant that it would not be possible to achieve a viable scheme on this site, nor would development of this site bring enhancement benefits to the existing community. Both sites were in a highly sustainable town centre site where there was easy access to public transport and other facilities. The layout of the sites was demonstrated, as well as the preferred scheme; including the contemporary design of the new dwellings. It was emphasised that the design was not finalised, however, and changes to design and materials might increase overall build costs.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Hutchison addressed the Committee as a local Ward Councillor. In summary, she raised concerns that the scheme being proposed had been rushed through and that other options had not been thoroughly explored, collaboratively with the local community. She believed that the redevelopment should strive to positively enhance the existing community and comments of local people must be responded to. Councillor Hutchison stated that it was too late for these matters to be dealt with at the planning application stage. To this end, she asked that the Committee request that further feasibility work be undertaken, in consultation with residents (notably having regard to parking and road safety) before establishing the principle that at least four new homes be provided by redevelopment of the sites.

At the request of a Member, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services clarified that those Committee members who were additionally on the Planning Committee should avoid indicating whether or not they would be minded to support the planning merits of the proposals, or otherwise. They should continue to keep an open mind and be prepared to listen to debate and ask questions as part of their determination of any planning application that may be brought forward.

David Chafe (TACT) drew attention that TACT had considered the report and was pleased to see a scheme go forward to planning application stage for new homes

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that the Council strived for the 40% affordable housing to be achieved at all development sites, and this was robustly challenged if developers queried viability. He also explained that the Council had undertaken all its usual consultation on the proposed development in line with procedures. He reminded the Committee that the Council would take every reasonable opportunity to redevelop land in its ownership for badly needed new homes. With regard to the relatively high cost per unit for the development, it was explained that this was due to factors including existing development constraints at the site and the cost of the General Fund land. The proposal had also been adjusted having regard to public consultation, resulting in fewer homes now being proposed. It was not expected that build costs would increase, although changes in design may add further expense – as would any additional wider community benefits not currently costed. The Head of New Homes Delivery also clarified that each of the four new homes would have one parking space and there were to be six casual spaces, with their allocation to be determined. He highlighted that not all the existing garages were currently used to accommodate vehicles. In

response to further questions, he clarified that comprehensive development of both sites (and possibly the allotments) might also be hard to achieve in planning terms as, for example, it must be demonstrated that there would be no adverse harm to residents' parking in the existing area as a consequence. The sites were also excluded from Local Plan Part 2 allocations and reference had been made, in terms of impact from the proposals on views, to an existing (and outdated) West Fulflood and Orams Arbour Design Statement.

During debate, some concern was expressed about the marginal viability of the scheme and that the ongoing maintenance costs of the new units should be firstly ascertained so as not to be excessive. Any redesign must also be carefully costed. However, it was agreed that the principle of developing the site for new homes should be further explored as part of the planning process – where further public consultation would be undertaken, including on the matters of concern already raised.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to prepare and submit a planning application to construct four new Council houses on the Greenhill Terrace site, as set out in the Report.
2. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to amend the proposals, if necessary, to prepare the scheme for planning application submission.
3. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to take all necessary actions to comply with any planning requirements that may arise following the submission of the planning applications.
4. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer), in conjunction with the Heads of Legal and Democratic Services and Estates, be authorised to proceed to tender for a design and build contract for the scheme either by first advertising the opportunity on Due North and Contracts Finder the procedure for which is to be agreed by the Heads of Legal and Democratic Services and Estates or by using an EU compliant framework agreement.
5. That a further report be brought back to Cabinet (Housing) Committee to approve the letting of the build contract for the scheme, and also approve release of the capital required under Financial Procedure Rule 6.4.
6. That the Head of Estates be authorised to negotiate and agree terms for easements, wayleaves and related agreements with utility suppliers, telecom/media providers and neighbours in order to facilitate the development.

5. **HOUSING PERFORMANCE UPDATE**
(Oral Report)

The Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) gave a presentation highlighting to Members the different performance information available via the Council's website. In particular, he drew Members' attention to the information available via the "House Mark Dashboard" which included comparison against other local authorities and housing providers. He suggested Councillors examine the information available and contact him with any queries.

The Assistant Director also advised that a report on 3rd quarter performance monitoring would be submitted to the next Cabinet (Housing) Committee on 22 March 2016.

RESOLVED:

That the various housing performance information available on the Council's website be noted.

6. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) DETAILED BUDGET/ BUSINESS PLAN**
(Report CAB2761(HSG) refers)

The Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) explained that the budget for 2016/17 had been produced on a "worst case" basis in relation to rents. There was still a great deal of uncertainty regarding future Government policy announcements, as summarised in Paragraph 4 of the Report. However, since the Report was produced, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had confirmed that certain types of property, including sheltered and temporary accommodation, would be excluded from the 1% reduction rules. At the previous Committee meeting, it had been agreed that delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director to approve final rents for such exception properties.

Mr D Chafe (TACT) confirmed that the Report had been considered at a TACT meeting where no objections had been raised to the proposals. The impact of further changes from Government was also raised.

Members asked a number of detailed questions on the proposals contained within the Report, including the new build programme outlined in Appendix 4.

The Assistant Director advised that Appendix 6 of the Report indicated a budget shortfall of £1.5 million in 2024/25 and further Reports would be submitted to future meetings of the Committee with proposals on how this could be addressed.

The Assistant Director explained that the increase in spending on void repairs was due to general increased costs in addition to a slight increase in the number of voids. The underspend in estate maintenance had resulted from an organisational change leading to funds not being fully spent in 2015/16, but this would be addressed in future years.

The Assistant Director advised that former tenants' arrears of approximately £85,000 had been forecast for write off in 2015/16. However, it was still possible for these debts to be collected if the opportunity arose in the future.

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that the earliest estimated date for receipt of the Section 106 contributions expected from the North Whiteley development was November 2016, although it was likely not to be received until 2017/18. It was likely that the Council would work jointly with partner housing providers to deliver the 350 new homes stipulated.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to Cabinet and to Council:

- 1. That the HRA Revised Budget for 2015/16 and the Budget for 2016/17 as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report be approved.**
- 2. That garage rents for tenants be increased by 4% and for non-tenants by 10% with effect from 4 April 2016.**
- 3. That the Housing Capital programme for 2015/16 to 2020/21 as set out in Appendices 3 and 4 to the report be approved.**
- 4. That the proposals for funding the Housing Capital programme as detailed in Appendix 5, including the borrowing required for 2015/16, be approved.**
- 5. That authority be given to incur capital expenditure of £9.257m for the Maintenance, Improvement and Renewal programme as detailed in the report and Appendix 3 to the report, in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 6.4 (noting that within this, for any schemes in excess of £100,000 a financial appraisal will be approved in accordance with the scheme of delegations).**
- 6. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer), in consultation with the Head of Finance and Portfolio Holder for Housing, be given delegated authority to make adjustments within the overall Maintenance, Improvement and Renewal programme as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, including the flexibility to substitute projects and re-balance expenditure within and between the different elements/schemes in order to meet operational needs, changing priorities and commitment targets, with any changes being reported to Committee at the earliest opportunity.**

7. That the HRA Business Plan self financing assumptions as detailed in Appendix 6 are noted and that forecast working balances are approved.

7. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY 2016-2021
(Report CAB2768(HSG) refers)

In response to questions, the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) advised that it was possible that the Government would introduce new licensing for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the forthcoming year. It was agreed that matters relating to HMOs across Winchester be considered as part of the Strategy.

During further discussion of the Strategy, the following comments/suggestions for changes were raised:

- Further information to be provided in the executive summary regarding the differences between rental and owner-occupier properties, including within the 800 dwellings inspected to provide a sample of the stock;
- The importance of communication and publicity in promoting the Strategy in order to improve awareness to the 41,500 houses within the private sector in the District;
- Specific reference should be made to mobile home parks and the role of the Private Sector Housing Team in visiting parks annually;
- It was noted that the Team worked closely with the University regarding student housing;
- The amount of useful information contained within the draft Strategy was welcomed and it was suggested it would be useful to share further with all Councillors.

The Committee noted that the Strategy was supported by TACT.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals within this Report are agreed for inclusion in the new Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy and that subject to any revisions (including those outlined above), a new draft Strategy be submitted to the Cabinet (Housing) Committee in March 2016 for recommendation to Cabinet.

8. OPTIONS FOR BRINGING EMPTY PROPERTIES BACK INTO USE
(Report CAB2765(HSG) refers)

During discussion, Members noted the variety of reasons why properties might remain vacant in addition to the individual differences involved in seeking to bring any property back into use. A number of Members also believed that it was not a huge problem in the District and some of the possible measures suggested could have significant resource implications. However, it was

agreed that further information was required in order that a decision on possible future action could be taken.

The Committee noted that TACT supported all methods that allowed long term empty properties to be brought back into use.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council adopts a more pro-active approach to identifying reasons for properties being empty, working with and supporting owners with the range of actions highlighted in options a) to g) in Paragraph 10 in the Report with effect from April 2016..

2. That an Empty Property Strategy/Action Plan be prepared for consideration by the Cabinet (Housing) Committee in March 2016, taking account of Resolution 1 above.

3. That a further report reviewing outcomes from the Empty Property Actions adopted in the above strategy be considered by Cabinet (Housing) Committee in March 2017.

9. **AUTHORISATION TO PROGRESS AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEME:
BAILEY CLOSE, STANMORE, WINCHESTER**
(Report CAB2764(HSG) refers)

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that of the 18 garages on site, only two were being used for a car on a regular basis. In general, the garages were in a poor state of repair. The Committee were shown photos of the existing site and draft plans for the future development.

Members noted that response to consultation had been low, but the Head of New Homes Delivery confirmed that all properties in the immediate area had been sent a letter and a consultation event had been held in an attempt to engage with as many residents as possible. One Member commented that the Stanmore Planning Framework had indicated an overall support for more affordable housing schemes in the Stanmore area.

One Member commented on the relatively high cost of the proposed scheme which would only provide five new units. However, the current condition and lack of regular use of the site was also noted.

Mr D Chafe stated that TACT were pleased the scheme was going forward.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to prepare and submit a planning application to construct five new Council flats on the Bailey Close site, Stanmore, as set out in the Report.
2. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to amend the proposals, if necessary, to prepare the schemes for planning application submission.
3. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to take all necessary actions to comply with any planning requirements that may arise following the submission of the planning applications.
4. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer), in conjunction with the Heads of Legal and Democratic Services and Estates, be authorised to proceed to tender for a design and build contract for the scheme either by first advertising the opportunity on Due North and Contracts Finder the procedure for which is to be agreed by the Heads of Legal and Democratic Services and Estates or by using an EU compliant framework agreement.
5. That a further report be brought back to Cabinet (Housing) Committee to approve the letting of the build contract for the scheme, and also approve release of the capital required under Financial Procedure Rule 6.4.
6. That the Head of Estates be authorised to negotiate and agree terms for easements, wayleaves and related agreements with utility suppliers, telecom/media providers and neighbours in order to facilitate the development.

10. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.
2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
##	Exempt Minutes:) Information relating to the

- Housing Term Maintenance Contracts – Extension to Osborne Contracts) financial or business affairs of) any particular person (including) the authority holding that) information). (Para 3 Schedule) 12A refers))) Information in respect of which a) claim to legal professional) privilege could be maintained in) legal proceedings. (Para 5) Schedule 12A refers)

11. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 30 November 2015 be approved and adopted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00pm and concluded at 7.30pm.

Chairman