

**CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE**

**23 November 2016**

Attendance:

Councillors:

Horrill (Chairman) (P)

Miller

Weston (P)

Deputy Members

Councillor Godfrey (Deputy Member for Councillor Miller)

Other invited Councillors:

Berry (P)

McLean (P)

Burns (P)

Scott (P)

Izard (P)

Tait (P)

TACT representatives:

Mrs M Gill (P)

Mr M Fawcitt (P)

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1. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Godfrey declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of agenda items due to his role as a County Council employee. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, he remained in the room, spoke and voted under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Standards Committee to participate and vote in all matters which might have a County Council involvement.

Councillor Scott declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of agenda items due to him being a Council tenant. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, he 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 rents.

2. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Horrill welcomed to the meeting the new invitees from TACT: Monica Gill and Michael Fawcitt. It was also noted that Sue Down would be attending future meetings on behalf of TACT.

Councillor Horrill also thanked David Chafe for his past work as Chairman of TACT.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 11 October 2016, less exempt minute, be approved and adopted.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr and Mrs Ryder spoke regarding CAB2868(HSG) and their comments are summarised under the relevant minute below.

5. **TRUSSELL CRESCENT, WEEKE – ESTATE IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS**  
(Report CAB2868(HSG) refers)

The Chairman noted that a petition from residents of Trussell Close had been submitted by Mrs Ryder raising various concerns about the proposals.

The Assistant Director (Housing) advised that the proposals had been discussed and generally supported by tenants of Trussell Crescent. Formal consultation with the wider community, including Trussell Close, had not yet taken place, but would be carried out as a next stage if the proposals were approved. The concerns raised by Trussell Close residents in the petition referred to above were set out in Paragraph 8.6 of the Report.

The Assistant Director acknowledged that residents had expressed a preference for parking at the front of the Crescent, however it would cost at least £63,000 to move existing services to enable this which would make the scheme unaffordable. Consequently, the only parking being proposed was at the rear of the Crescent where there was capacity to fit 17 parking spaces. Although other options were potentially available in the area, Officers recommended the proposals as set out in the Report as providing the most cost-effective manner of achieving estate improvements. However, the Assistant Director highlighted that a new Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) covering the Weeke area had just come into force and Members might wish to defer a decision on parking to allow the impact of this to be fully considered.

Mr Jonathan and Mrs Michelle Ryder (organiser of petition and residents of Trussell Close) addressed Cabinet and responded to Members' questions during the public participation period, as summarised below. Their concerns related to the proposal to provide eight parking bays on verges at either side of the Close and related to the impact on safety, including pedestrian safety on the service road. They also had concerns regarding the visual impact and highlighted that the proposed bays would be very close to some of the properties in Trussell Close. They also criticised the lack of consultation with Close residents. As a minimum, they requested that six bays (three on each side) be removed. They requested that the Council undertake a more detailed

review of alternative options available to enable proposals that were acceptable to residents of both Trussell Crescent and Close. In response to questions, Mrs Ryder stated that the petition had been signed by all but one of the residents of Trussell Close. She confirmed that the Council had not contacted residents of the Close regarding the proposals until after they had received the objections. She acknowledged that the Weeke TRO referred to above appeared to be having a positive impact on levels of parking in the area generally.

The Chairman thanked Mr & Mrs Ryder for their comments and stated that she had visited the area and believed that other options were available. It was therefore proposed that the decision on parking be deferred to enable Officers to examine further the possibility of alternative options and also to monitor the impact of the TRO. A further report should then be submitted to Committee, following consultation with residents of both Trussell Crescent and Close. One Member suggested that a site visit for Committee Members and invitees be arranged prior to the Report coming back to Committee and this was agreed.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Learney welcomed the proposals for estate improvements and the suggestion to defer the decision on parking improvements, noting that there had been significant concerns raised. She also believed the impact of the new Weeke TRO should be assessed. She requested that whilst deferring the decision on parking improvements, the Committee agree to allocate the £40,000 for future parking improvements.

In response to Members' questions, the Assistant Director confirmed that the provision of new fencing in such cases was an agreed exception to the approved Estates Improvement Programme. Improvements at Trussell Crescent would also include garden clearance and, once in place, the Council would take enforcement action against any tenants who failed to maintain their gardens to an acceptable standard. Members acknowledged the value of estate improvements to tenants and highlighted Firmstone Road as another area that required attention.

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

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the proposals for lighting, gardens and fencing improvements to Trussell Crescent as set out in Paragraphs 8.2 c) and d) of the Report be approved up to the value of £110,000 in accordance with the approved Estate Improvement Programme.
2. That a decision on parking improvements be deferred to allow a more detailed review of options and an evaluation of the impact of parking restrictions recently implemented in the area.
3. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) writes to all signatories to the Petition received, responding specifically to the key points raised and confirming the outcome from this meeting.

6. **HOUSING GROUNDS MAINTENANCE – FUTURE PROCUREMENT OPTIONS**

(Report CAB2867(HSG) refers)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting various members of the Tenant Scrutiny Group (TSG), including Monica Gill and Tony White, who addressed the Committee regarding this Report and responded to Members' questions, as summarised below.

Mrs Gill highlighted that the TSG considered that they did not receive cooperation from The Landscape Group (TLG) for much of their review, which started nearly four years ago. They had significant concerns regarding the standard of service offered by TLG, as set out in their Report (contained as an Appendix to CAB2867(HSG)). Mrs Gill believed that TLG did not have sufficient staff deployed to operate the contract effectively and had not adequately assessed the resources required before starting the contract. In addition, the management had changed on a regular basis. Mrs Gill confirmed that monitoring was undertaken by 40 tenants across the District, not all of whom were TACT Members.

In response to questions, Mrs Gill confirmed that some service improvements had occurred since TLG had been taken over by another company (and were now branded ID Verde,(IDV)), but she was concerned these improvements would not be sustained. She agreed that the Scrutiny Group's preference would be for the service to be provided in-house.

The Assistant Director (Housing) reminded Members that the Report was concerned with seeking feedback on performance under the grounds maintenance contract on HRA housing land only, not on general performance across the District under the wider contract.

During debate, the Chairman and other Members thanked the tenants involved in monitoring the performance for their work and acknowledged that tenants paid for the service themselves and should receive value for money. A number of Members' expressed concern about the performance of IDV and also questioned the options available to the Council to seek financial redress for failings under the contract.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Environment advised that the current contract ended in October 2019. A detailed options appraisal and review was underway and the next meeting of the East Hants District Council (EHDC)/Winchester City Council Joint Environmental Services Committee (JESC) would consider a detailed report on performance. Both he and the EHDC Environmental Services Contract Manager emphasised that the performance of IDV had improved in recent months.

Councillors Horrill and Weston stated that as they were both Members of JESC, they would ensure concerns raised were examined further and the work of the TSG was very helpful in this regard.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's formal response to the Joint Environmental Services Contract Consultation Review express concern with any proposal to extend the existing contract, as set out in 8.6 d) in the Report.

7. **NEW HOMES DEVELOPMENT – THE VALLEY, STANMORE, WINCHESTER**  
(Report CAB2865(HSG) refers)

The Head of New Homes Delivery emphasised that the proposals were to construct up to 76 new homes, but that the cost involved might require this number be reduced. In addition, it might be necessary for a mix of tenures to be offered, including possibly open market value homes, in order for the overall scheme to be viable.

The Head of New Homes Delivery requested that Recommendation 1 of the Report be amended to include delegated authority to the Assistant Director to advertise the proposed disposal of open space land required for development, with any objections to be brought back to this Committee for consideration. This was agreed.

The Head of New Homes Delivery displayed initial design proposals for the scheme and outlined the number of community events and consultation that had taken place to date. Should the Committee agree the proposals, it was anticipated a planning application would be submitted for consideration at Planning Committee early in 2017. In response to Members' questions, he confirmed that there was no plans to develop the Cromwell Road play area site.

One Member expressed concern about the high cost of the scheme and its overall viability. In addition, Members queried whether the high number of one-bedroomed flats was appropriate, noting the number of family homes that had been converted to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the Stanmore area. The Head of New Homes Delivery emphasised that the difficulties caused by the heavily sloping site had been recognised at the onset and that parts of the scheme were likely to cost more than others. The actual cost would only be known once tenders were returned and at that time the results (and viability appraisal) would be brought back to Committee for final approval to proceed. A needs assessment had indicated that the highest requirement in the area was for one-bedroom dwellings and, the location meant that there was a large amount of open space around for general use.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of New Homes Delivery advised that it was proposed that all dwellings be built to the nationally described space standard and all the flats would have balconies (or a small outside area if on the ground floor). There was the possibility of making any flats to be sold

outright or offered for shared ownership slightly smaller in order to reduce costs.

Whilst welcoming the proposals, one Member commented that the scheme would have an impact on ongoing parking issues in Stanmore which would need to be addressed.

Monica Gill (TACT) welcomed the provision of more homes, provided they were offered at an affordable rent.

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 up to 76 new Council homes on land at The Valley, Winchester and if necessary, advertise the proposed disposal of open land required for development, with any objections to be reported back to Committee for consideration.

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 a further report be brought back to Cabinet (Housing) Committee to authorise the procurement process for the scheme.

5. That the Assistant Director (Estates and Regeneration) 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.

**8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET UPDATE AND BUSINESS PLAN OPTIONS**

(Report CAB2860(HSG) refers)

The Assistant Director (Housing) emphasised that the impact of the dwelling rent reduction was an expected loss of revenue to the HRA for 2017/18 of £265,000. The graph at Paragraph 2.5 indicated the current forecast shortfalls in capital funding for the HRA Business Plan.

The Assistant Director advised that acquisition of Milford House and Gordon Watson House had been delayed, but was due to be completed the following week.

In response to questions regarding the update on the Chesil Street Extra Care Development (Paragraph 8.16 of the Report refers), the Head of New Homes Delivery advised that the Council had no record of the fibre optic cable which was required to be relocated. He confirmed that the Council were pursuing British Telecom to recoup costs in relation to this. Other additional costs had arisen due to required improvements to the windows in terms of noise reduction and also changes to brick finishes and cladding. The Chairman emphasised that the Project Team were monitoring the project carefully and seeking to minimise additional costs. It was anticipated that the new scheme would be open to residents from October 2017.

In response to questions, the Assistant Director advised that there had been 22 Right to Buy sales to date in 2016/17 and the overall forecast for the year had therefore been revised to 37 sales. The Council retained approximately 40% of receipts for one for one replacement development, but the Government required that such receipts must be used within three years.

In relation to garage rents, the Committee noted the comparatively low level of rent charged by the Council to non-tenants compared to other local providers (table at Paragraph 8.10 of the Report refers). In addition, Members noted that there was currently a waiting list for garages. It was therefore agreed that an alternative approach be considered, as suggested in Paragraph 8.7 of the Report.

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

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Housing Revenue Account revised forecast for 2016/17 detailed in paragraph 8.2 and Appendices 1 and 2 be approved.
2. That the proposed HRA capital programme and funding for 2016/17 to 2021/22 detailed in paragraph 8.4 and Appendices 3, 4 and 5 be noted.
3. That the rent reduction for Council dwellings of 1% in line with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 be noted.
4. That with regard to the options for setting garage rents as detailed in the Report, Members preference be as indicated above and this be fed into final recommendations which will be brought back to Committee in February 2017.
5. That the update on the Chesil Street Extra Care project be noted.

9. **HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**  
(Report CAB2866(HSG) refers)

The Committee noted that the remit of the Strategy had been widened from its previous focus primarily on maintenance. This was to ensure that the Council

made best use of its housing assets in meeting housing need and the emerging challenges included in the Housing and Planning Bill and other more recent Government announcements. The Assistant Director (Housing) drew attention to Pages 15 – 17 of the Strategy which set out the proposed key priorities and these informed the Action Plan.

In response to Members' questions, the Assistant Director advised that the receipts from the proposed sales of Council houses would be retained until the Government's position regarding high value voids had been clarified.

The Assistant Director clarified that there was no longer any agreed specified time period for bathroom refurbishments as these were replaced, as required through the responsive repairs programme.

A number of Members commented that the previous Housing Conference had been very useful and suggested it might be an appropriate time to be held again. The Assistant Director agreed to consider this possibility further.

In response to Members' questions, the Assistant Director confirmed that it was proposed to review the suitability of a number of sheltered housing schemes. However, no firm proposals were being suggested at this time and residents' would be fully involved in discussions if any changes were put forward.

The Assistant Director stated that he would welcome further Member involvement in the Asset Management Group and confirmed that, in any case, the Portfolio Holder had been fully involved.

In response to questions from TACT, the Assistant Director advised that the Council might possibly consider demolishing existing Council properties and rebuilding new homes on the site if an area was currently both low density and poor quality.

Mr Fawcitt (TACT) noted that the Government had just announced that the previous "pay to stay" proposals would not be progressed but it was open to individual local authorities to retain should they wish. The Chairman stated that due to the timing of the announcement, it had not been possible to discuss further with Housing Officers, but this would be addressed at a future meeting.

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

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the draft Housing Asset Management Strategy included as an Appendix to the Report be approved.
2. That the Assistant Director (Estates) be authorised to market Prospect House, Winchester and 75 Middlebrook St, Winchester for sale and negotiate terms and accept the best available offer.



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 of the previous meeting	) Information relating to the ) financial or business affairs of ) any particular person (including ) the authority holding that ) information). (Para 3 Schedule ) 12A refers)

11. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 11 October 2016 be approved and adopted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00pm and concluded at 6.50pm.

Chairman