

**CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE****22 November 2017****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Horrill (Chairman) (P)

Brook

Miller (P)

**Standing Deputies:**

Councillor Godfrey (deputy for Councillor Brook)

**Other invited Councillors:**

Berry (P)

Scott

Elks (P)

Tait (P)

**TACT representatives:**

Mrs M Gill (P)

Mr M Fawcitt (P)

Mrs S Down – Deputy

**Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:**

Councillor Learney

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**1. MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 4 October 2017, be approved and adopted.

**2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Jonathan Ryder spoke regarding Report CAB2979(HSG) and his comments are summarised under the relevant minute below.

David Chafe spoke regarding Reports CAB2997(HSG), CAB2986(HSG) and CAB2989(HSG) and his comments are summarised under the relevant minutes below.

Michael Gibbons spoke during general public participation and his comments are summarised below.

Mr Gibbons spoke as a 24 year old who had lived in Winchester all his life but did not have any realistic prospect of buying a property due to the high house prices in the area. Consequently, he had registered on the Council's self-build register as it appeared to offer a potentially affordable means to build his own home. However, in the last year, only two plots of land had become available and he queried whether there were likely to be any more released in the near future?

The Chairman thanked Mr Gibbons for his comments and highlighted that the Council were aware of the difficulties facing young people in the housing market in the area and had made changes to the Housing Strategy to take steps to attempt to address this. The Head of New Homes Delivery emphasised that there were currently 200 applicants on the self-build register. The Council would be required to make available plots for self-build as part of the Local Plan Review and the Estates Team included an additional post to assess potential sites suitability. Members noted that self build was not necessarily classed as affordable.

3. **SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW**  
(Report CAB2988(HSG) refers)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting a number of members of the tenant scrutiny group who had conducted the review and thanked them for their work.

The tenant scrutiny group members highlighted the request that the schemes' name be changed from "sheltered housing" and also to change the name of the weekly officer time at the schemes from "surgeries." They emphasised the usefulness of the exercise and welcomed that a number of the recommendations had already been clarified or dealt with.

Monica Gill (TACT) highlighted that some residents could not leave their flats and could not therefore attend scheme activities and it was important that efforts were made to involve these residents too. Some schemes had introduced a "Buddy Scheme" and she suggested that this be encouraged across the service. Members welcomed this idea and the Head of Housing Management confirmed that the Sheltered Housing Officers would support such initiatives.

During discussion, the tenant scrutiny group emphasised that activities at the schemes were open to non-residents and Councillors were also welcome to attend.

The Corporate Head of Housing drew Members' attention to the recommendation regarding procurement of a community Wi-Fi network which should help with the issues of social isolation as discussed and should be achieved from within current service level charges.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the recommendations and responses in this report regarding the scrutiny exercise be noted and the actions be approved.
2. That proposals to install a community Wi-Fi network to all sheltered housing schemes be approved.
3. That, for the procurement of a community Wi-Fi network to all sheltered schemes, the Councils Contracts Procedure Rules be waived, and delegated authority be given to the Corporate Head of Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services and the Legal Services Manager to select and subscribe to (if deemed appropriate and necessary) an existing external Framework agreement to procure these works.

4. **ESTATES IMPROVEMENTS – TRUSSELL CRESCENT, WEEKE**  
(Report CAB2979(HSG) refers)

During public participation, Jonathan Ryder addressed Members as a local resident and representative of the Winchester New Allotments Holders' Society (WNAHS) that leased an allotment site to the rear of the Crescent. In summary, he welcomed the proposal to remove parking spaces adjacent to his property in addition to the plans for further consultation. He requested that WNAHS be consulted on any further changes. He noted that since the Report was published, he had been advised that the plans as drawn were not accurate and did not incorporate the revised access gate (which he welcomed). Finally, he welcomed the progress on improvements to street scene but queried how tenants who continued to neglect their gardens would be dealt with.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Learney addressed the Committee as a local Ward Member and, in summary, welcomed the improvements made to the area to date. She agreed that the WNAHS should be consulted on any future proposals and also that local Ward Councillors be involved in finalising details of consultation before wider publication.

With regard to garden maintenance, the Head of Housing Management advised that the Council were continuing to see more tenants taking part in the improvement schemes and officers were working to increase participation further. However, the Council did have powers to take action against tenants who continued to not maintain gardens adequately as breach of tenancy agreements.

The Head of Housing Management agreed to consult the Allotment Society and also to involve local Ward Councillors before publishing the next stage of consultation with local residents.

During discussion, Members welcomed the improvements made to the area to date and the proposals contained in the report.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That an additional £70,000 be allocated from the approved Estate Improvement budget funded through the Housing Revenue Account, to facilitate the completion of the garden/fencing works and soft landscaping proposals set out in this report.

2. That the Estate Improvement Officer be authorised to instruct a further consultation exercise with the Local Community regarding the proposals to increase and formalise parking provision along the access road and in the garage forecourt areas.

5. **NEW HOMES DEVELOPMENT, ROWLINGS ROAD, WEEKE – APPROVAL OF OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE AND PROCUREMENT PROCESS**  
(Report CAB2997(HSG) refers)

The Head of New Homes Delivery introduced the proposal as set out in the report. He stated that only a few of the garages were currently let to non-residents and these could be accommodated at nearby garages at Rowlands Road West. In addition, in order to address some concerns raised by residents regarding the impact on parking in the area, it was proposed the scheme would exceed the County Council's residential parking standards and provide 13 on-site parking spaces for 7 dwellings.

David Chafe spoke during participation and whilst welcoming the proposed improvements to parking provision, he believed that further work might be required to restore the Council's relationship with some local residents.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Learney expressed her support for the scheme as a Ward member as it provided much needed affordable accommodation and also offered environmental improvements and better permeability between Weeke and Harestock. She believed there was broad community support for the scheme. On a general point, she highlighted that Council garages were generally too small to accommodate modern cars and were often instead used for storage. She suggested that the provision of secure storage was a growth area which the Council could investigate as part of its entrepreneurial approach.

In response to questions, the Head of Housing Finance confirmed that the estimated costs outlined in Appendix 1 of the report included loss of income from garage rentals over a 30 year period. The land valuation had been based upon its existing use as garage land.

Members supported the proposals as set out in the report.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the Corporate Head of Housing be authorised to prepare and submit a planning application to construct seven new Council homes at Rowlings Road, as set out in the report.
2. That the Corporate Head of Housing be authorised to amend the proposals if necessary to prepare the scheme for a planning application submission.
3. That the Corporate Head of Housing be authorised to take all necessary actions to comply with any planning requirements that may arise following the submission of the planning application.
4. That the Corporate Head of Housing in conjunction with the Legal Services Manager be authorised to proceed to tender a Design and Build contract using the SE Business Portal for this scheme and the results of the tender be reported to a future Committee.
5. That the Corporate Head of Asset Management be authorised to negotiate and agree terms for easements, wayleaves and related agreements with utility suppliers, telecom/media providers, Highways Authority and neighbours in order to facilitate the development.

6. **TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**  
(Report CAB2987(HSG) refers)

The TACT representatives present welcomed the report and the opportunity provided to tenants to respond to consultation and receive feedback. They suggested that it might be appropriate for tenants to lead on future scrutiny reviews of aspects of the Council's housing services, rather than officers.

In response to questions, the Corporate Head of Housing agreed that using social media was an important way of communicating, particularly with younger tenants. Citizen Lab was an option under consideration listed in the report.

During discussion, Members noted the usefulness of the scrutiny exercises undertaken previously by tenants and welcomed these being supported further. The Corporate Head of Housing emphasised that the Council had a duty to demonstrate that it was involving tenants in the delivery of the service and the Tenant Engagement Strategy was a robust method of demonstrating this.

In response to questions, the Head of Housing Finance confirmed that he would investigate the possibility of reinstating the Leaseholders' Forum which was in place until 2016.

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

RESOLVED:

That the draft Tenant Engagement Strategy 2017- 2019 be approved.

7. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET OPTIONS 2018/19 AND RENT SETTING**

(Report CAB2986(HSG) refers)

The Head of Housing Finance introduced the report and drew Members' attention to two matters officers would welcome views on. The first of these was the rate of garage rent increase (paragraphs 10.27 to 10.29 of the report) and the second regarded the proposal to transfer garages from the Housing Revenue Account(HRA) to General Fund (paragraph 10.22 to 10.25 of the report).

During public participation, David Chafe asked for clarification of a number of abbreviations used in the report and also queried if garages were transferred to the General Fund, the maintenance costs would also be transferred?

The Head of Housing Finance explained the abbreviations used and advised that there would be a recharge to the General Fund for ongoing maintenance of garages should the proposal to transfer be agreed.

During discussion, a number of Members raised the possibility of non-residents being charged more commercial rents for garages and the Chairman requested that Officers investigate this suggestion further.

TACT representatives present generally supported the recommendations, but requested further information regarding the proposal to transfer garages.

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

**RESOLVED:**

That the revised forecasts for the HRA for 2017/18 as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 are noted.

2. That the amended capital programmes for Housing Services and New Build Projects together with the funding schedule for 2017/18 to 2026/27 as detailed in Appendices 4, 5 and 6 are approved.

3. That the rent reduction for Council dwellings of 1% as highlighted in paragraph 10.18 in line with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 be noted.

4. That officers consider further options for setting garage rents to reflect the discussion regarding the potential to match market rents outlined above and report back as part of the budget recommendations which will be brought back to Committee in January 2018.

5. That the principle for the transfer of garages from the HRA to the General Fund over a period of three to five years, commencing in 2018/19 be supported, to reflect the fact that garages are available for wider community use and do not form part of the delivery of the Council's core housing service.

8. **QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE MONITORING**  
(Report CAB2989(HSG) refers)

The Chairman highlighted that the HRA performance had also been considered by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 20 November 2017 (Report OS183 refers).

During public participation, David Chafe asked what partnership working was involved with Wayfarer partnership and progress on the tender for new homes at The Valley, Stanmore.

The Corporate Head of Housing advised that the purpose of the Wayfarer partnership was to share resources with other local authorities regarding applications for grants. The Head of New Homes Delivery stated that work on tender process for The Valley scheme was ongoing and the mini competition stage 1 was about to begin.

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

**RESOLVED:**

That the progress achieved during the second quarter of 2017/18 be noted and the contents of the Report be noted.

9. **ESTABLISHING A HOUSING COMPANY (LESS EXEMPT APPENDICES)**  
(Report CAB2990(HSG) refers)

The Corporate Head of Housing introduced the report and explained the background to the proposals as set out. These included a Government expectation that Councils would utilise all options available to it to build new homes, including establishing a housing company. But, the Council believed its current new build programme through the Housing Revenue Account offered a preferred method which had demonstrated to offer results. Therefore, the proposal was to establish a housing company to deliver sub-market rented proposals.

In response to questions, the Corporate Head of Housing confirmed he had consulted other local authorities regarding their use of housing companies. The proposal was regarded as a means of bringing additional capital into the new build programme. Members noted that there would be additional work required in terms of legal support for establishing a company. The estimated timescale for establishing a company was approximately six months.

During debate, Cabinet Members welcomed the cautious approach to establishing a housing company as set out in the report. In reaching their decision, Members had regard to the information contained in Exempt Appendices A and B of the Report.

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

**RECOMMENDED (TO CABINET):**

- 1. That the proposal to establish a wholly Council owned non-charitable Company limited by shares to deliver and manage sub market rented housing be approved.**
- 2. That a £10m loan facility to support the company's development activity be included within the Capital Strategy for 2018/19.**
- 3. That a further report be brought to the Cabinet (Housing) Committee, setting out the detailed business plan and draft governance agreements for the company.**



