

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 21 November 2018

Attendance:

Councillors

Horrill (Chairman)

Brook

Miller

Other Invited Councillors:

Berry

Izard

Deputy invited Councillors:

McLean

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Rutter

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Burns

1. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2018**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Cabinet (Housing) Committee held 4 July 2018 be approved and adopted.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait spoke regarding the Council's register for the provision of sites for self-build properties as had been highlighted by a local resident (Michael Gibbons) at a previous meeting of the Committee on 22 November 2017. In summary, he queried whether the measure was working effectively as, to his knowledge, only one site since had received planning permission.

The Chairman confirmed that offering a mixture of tenures was an important element of the Council's Housing Strategy and offering sites for self-build was one part of this. The Portfolio Holder for Built Environment would examine this further as part of the forthcoming Local Plan Review. In addition, the Chairman requested that the Head of New Homes Development investigate this matter.

3. **DISPOSAL OF LAND AT MOUNTBATTEN PLACE, KINGS WORTHY**
(CAB3104(HSG))

The Chairman emphasised that building new affordable homes and offering a variety of options was a key part of the Council's housing strategy. The Council had previously worked with Footsteps Living Limited on a scheme in Otterbourne.

During public participation, Ian Tait spoke in support of the scheme, which he noted had previously been considered by Winchester Housing Trust (of which he was a Director) but the Trust had suggested Footsteps might be a more appropriate organisation to deliver the scheme due to design issues.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Rutter spoke as a local Ward Councillor and in summary, whilst not objecting to the proposals overall, raised a number of concerns:

- The proposed size of the flats was very small and whilst possibly large enough for one person, would not allow for growing families. Would the person become ineligible for other affordable housing options if they wished to sell and move on?
- She requested reassurance about the level of demand for such properties locally;
- Why was the site being offered to Footsteps to develop rather than the Council developing itself?

On behalf of TACT, Mrs Gill stated that the TACT view was the Council should develop the site itself. Mr Fawcitt also queried the status of Footsteps as it was not a registered provider.

The Head of New Homes Delivery responded to questions raised during public participation, in addition to concerns raised by TACT and some of the other invited Members present, as summarised below:

- At 35 sq.m, the flat size was acknowledged to be small. However, officers had visited other similar schemes and had been impressed by the standard of design. Research undertaken amongst younger members of Council staff had indicated there was a demand for the option to buy such properties as an alternative to equivalent priced private renting of a room in a shared HMO property.
- Any resident whose situation "outgrew" their accommodation was able to sell and move on.
- Conditions of sale of properties would include a restriction on sub-letting.
- Footsteps had undertaken investigatory work into the site and specialised in offering this type of product. In the longer term, it might be appropriate for the Council to build on experience of this scheme to develop other similar schemes itself. However, for this project, it was considered preferable for Footsteps to be given the opportunity to develop, within a stated timeframe.
- Footsteps were considered to be too small an organisation to qualify as a registered provider but their work was consistent with such an organisation.

- The Head of New Homes Delivery emphasised that the potential surplus generated for the Housing Revenue Account by the sale of land was dependant upon further investigations not highlighting additional costs.
- On the wider issue of providing additional housing, the Leader confirmed that the possibility of establishing a Housing Company was still under investigation and the Corporate Head of Housing (Interim) advised it was intended to bring a further report on the matter in early 2019.

During further discussions it was suggested that additional details (including photographs) of similar schemes undertaken by specialist providers, in addition to the research into potential demand, be shared with Committee Members.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the disposal of the land at Mountbatten Place, Kings Worthy, as shown outlined in the plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report, to Footsteps Living Limited be approved in principle, subject to the Corporate Head of Asset Management negotiating terms and conditions with a further report to approve.
2. Subject to final approval, that the Corporate Head of Housing be authorised to take the appropriate action to terminate any tenancies of garages affected by the scheme.
3. That the Corporate Head of Asset Management be authorised to negotiate and agree terms for easements, wayleaves and related agreements with utility providers, Highway Authority and neighbours in order to facilitate the development.

4. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET OPTIONS 2019/20**
(CAB3098(HSG))

The Chairman drew Members' attention to key elements of the report, namely: the 1% rent reduction; rectification works required for Victoria House; and funding for the Wickham Community Land Trust.

The Head of Housing Finance advised that the calculations within the report were prepared prior to the Government announcement about the removal of the HRA debt cap. The results of the recent consultation on "right to buy" sales was also awaited. Once both had been received it would be possible to undertake a full review of options. The Chairman stated this would include a plan for providing additional new homes.

Mrs Gill and Mr Fawcitt confirmed that they had met with the Head of Housing Finance prior to the meeting and TACT were happy with the contents of the report.

In response to Members' questions, the Corporate Head of Housing (Interim) advised that she could provide a profile of types of properties sold under "right to buy". It was highlighted that over the previous year, the Council had built more new homes than had been sold under "right to buy".

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

RECOMMENDED (TO COUNCIL):

THAT SUBJECT TO THE CORPORATE HEAD OF HOUSING BEING SATISFIED THAT SUITABLE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS ARE IN PLACE AND THE COMPLETION OF A FUNDING AGREEMENT BETWEEN WICKHAM COMMUNITY LAND TRUST (WCLT) AND THE COUNCIL, A SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL ESTIMATE OF £410K BE APPROVED AND A GRANT AWARD OF THIS SUM BE MADE TO WCLT FOR THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

RESOLVED:

1. The revised forecasts for the HRA for 2018/19, as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 be approved.
 2. The amended capital programmes for Housing Services and New Build Projects together with the funding schedule for 2018/19 to 2027/28 as detailed in Appendices 3, 4 and 5 are approved.
 3. The rent reduction for Council dwellings of 1% in 2019/20, as highlighted in paragraph 11.7, in line with MHCLG rent setting policy is approved.
 4. The latest forecast for the rectification works, as outlined in paragraph 11.11, for Victoria House are noted.
5. **HOME LOSS AND DISCRETIONARY PAYMENT POLICY**
(CAB3097(HSG))

The Chairman stated that this was a new Policy which set out a framework of possible payments available for tenants whose property was directly affected by the council's planned development proposals.

The Head of New Homes Delivery outlined the key elements of the proposed policy, highlighting that some payments were statutory and some discretionary. Discretionary payments would not exceed the statutory amount. The policy set out procedures for Officers to follow and emphasised that tenants should engage with the Council at an early date.

Mrs Gill confirmed that comments from TACT had been taken into account in the drafting of the Policy.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of New Homes Delivery advised that the policy stipulated that the level of compensation claimed would be reasonable. Early discussions between tenants and officers should highlight any situations where this might be an issue.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the Home Loss and Discretionary Payment Policy be approved.
2. That delegated authority is given to the Corporate Head of Housing to approve discretionary and statutory compensation.
3. That delegated authority is given to the Corporate Head of Housing to authorise and sign Demolition Notices.

The meeting commenced at 4.35 pm and concluded at 5.35 pm

Chairman