

## **BUSINESS AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 21 June 2022**

Attendance:

Councillors  
Fern (Chairperson)

Cramoysan  
Isaacs

Small

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Bronk, Miller, Radcliffe and Scott

Deputy Members:

Councillor Batho (as deputy for Councillor Bronk) and Councillor Horrill (as deputy for Councillor Miller)

Other members in attendance:

Councillors Bronk, Ferguson, Thompson and Tod

[Audio and video recording of this meeting](#)

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1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations were made.

3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRPERSON FOR THE 2022/23 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED:

that Councillor Fern be appointed Vice-Chairperson for the 2022/23 municipal year.

Councillor Fern proceeded to chair the meeting as Councillor Bronk could only attend this meeting virtually.

4. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Bronk made the following announcements:

1. he apologised for not being able to attend the meeting in person
2. he suggested that an item for the future work programme of the committee could be the results of a forthcoming Tenants Satisfaction Survey
3. he advised the committee of a proposal that the cabinet would be considering in due course to establish a distinct housing committee and would provide further details when these were known
4. he informed that the University of Winchester had approached him regarding the Global Entrepreneurship Week taking place in November and contact had been made with the cabinet member to progress this. He suggested that a presentation from the University may be appropriate before November.

5. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 2022**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 March 2022 be approved and adopted.

6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The chairperson welcomed the three members of TACT who were present at the meeting and confirmed that they would be invited to speak on agenda items 7 and 8 of the meeting.

Regarding the Housing Services Compensation policy (BHP029), Mr Light informed the committee that in general, he was supportive of the policy. He further advised that he felt that £15 seemed a reasonable payment for a missed appointment but asked that compensation payments where a tenant was without heating or plumbing needed to be considered further. In addition, Mr Chafe believed that the key concern regarding the level of compensation for missed appointments was where a tenant had missed a day's work for the appointment and whether the proposed payment was appropriate compensation for that.

Regarding the Empty Homes Strategy 2022 - 2027 (BHP030), Mr Light advised the committee that TACT was generally supportive of the draft strategy.

7. **HOUSING SERVICES - COMPENSATION POLICY (BHP029)**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing and the Property Services Manager introduced the report, ref BHP029, ([available here](#)) which set out proposals for the Housing Services Compensation Policy.

The committee was recommended to review the draft policy and comment on:

1. the appropriateness of the proposed policy
2. the levels of specific awards
3. any other factors which should be included within the policy.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised:

1. how would the policy apply to claims for issues where roofs had been exposed for extended periods
2. appointment time bandings
3. compensation following a missed appointment
4. the process for compensation payments being made and the anticipated timescales
5. the anticipated timescales for repairs being undertaken
6. the consultation undertaken with tenants on the proposed policy
7. the plans for future communication of the policy
8. how the policy applied to exceptional items not specified in the schedule
9. whether larger payments had to be referred to the cabinet member
10. whether a longer period of time for claims to be submitted should be provided
11. specifying the standards of repair expected so it was clear whether compensation would be appropriate
12. the treatment of repetitive faults for example lifts, how the policy applied to where a repair was no longer cost-effective
13. the risk that the policy drove the wrong behaviours for example to do "quick fixes"
14. turning the document into an accessible, tenant-focused document.

These points were responded to by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing, the Corporate Head of Housing, the Property Services Manager and the Responsive Maintenance Manager accordingly and were noted by the cabinet members present at the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

that officers and the cabinet member consider the comments of the committee as part of the next stage of policy formation.

**8. EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2022 - 2027 (BHP030)**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing and the Senior Private Sector Housing Officer introduced the report, ref BHP030 ([available here](#)) which set out proposals for the Empty Homes Strategy 2022 – 2027.

The committee was recommended to:

1. review the draft strategy which addressed empty homes within the Winchester district
2. review and comment on the aims and objectives set out in Appendix 4.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised:

1. the typical timeframes between the initial correspondence being issued to an owner of an empty property and the subsequent reoccupation of the property
2. the impact of unusual external factors such as the impact of COVID-19 on the rental market, and how properties could become empty in these unusual circumstances and how council policies such as council tax premium were used
3. the potential to review the council tax premium policy to ensure its relevance in current market conditions
4. whether sufficient resources currently exist to manage the empty properties caseload
5. benchmarking the council's performance against near neighbours or similar authorities
6. clarifying the subset of the total number of empty properties to understand where the genuine problems exist
7. confirming the main changes between the previous policy and this draft
8. the timing of the letters notifying property owners of a rise in council tax
9. the use of local ward member knowledge in identifying long term empty properties.

These points were responded to by the Strategic Director, the Corporate Head of Housing and the Senior Private Sector Housing Officer accordingly and were noted by the cabinet members present at the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the Cabinet Member and officers note the comments of the committee
2. that officers respond to several questions regarding the use of any available discretions of the council tax premium policy, in particular the use of the charge in exceptional circumstances.

9. **GREEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY - DRAFT ACTION PLAN (BHP033)**

The Cabinet Member for Business and Culture and the Service Lead - Economy & Tourism introduced the report, ref BHP033 ([available here](#)) which set out proposals for the Green Economic Development Strategy (GEDS) - Draft Action Plan.

The committee was recommended to:

1. note the approach to project prioritisation and the process to identify actions for 2022-2024
2. review and comment on the GEDS Action Plan 2022-2024
3. support the approach to create a web-based action plan that could be accessed, updated and promoted via the council website.

Councillor Wallace addressed the committee. In summary, Councillor Wallace welcomed the range of actions planned as part of the strategy but felt that the action plan could be improved through additional work to the performance

indicators so that they easily show where attention was required and where progress had been made.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised:

1. the management approach and processes required to embrace and embed the changes needed across the whole organisation to achieve the stated actions
2. the potential, competing priorities of an area's economic and environmental needs
3. the economic issues arising from a lack of affordable housing and insufficient parking provision
4. the impact of the local lettings policy not applying to larger settlements
5. how it was felt that the strategy would reduce inequality in the district
6. identifying and dealing with those actions that the city council had full control over
7. Whether the GEDS Key Performance Indicator (KPI) review be undertaken as part of the wider council plan KPI refresh
8. clarifying the membership of the Programme and Capital (PAC) board
9. whether the implementation group in paragraph 3.17 of the report should include officers responsible for new homes delivery.

These points were responded to by Cabinet Member for Business and Culture, the Strategic Director and the Service Lead - Economy & Tourism accordingly and were noted by the cabinet members present at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

that the Cabinet Member and officers note the comments of the committee.

10. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT HIGH STREETS PRIORITY PLAN - UP-DATE AND PROGRESS REPORT (BHP034)**

The Cabinet Member for Business and Culture and the Service Lead - Economy & Tourism introduced the report, ref BHP034 ([available here](#)) which set out proposals for the Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan, Up-Date and Progress Report.

The committee was recommended to:

1. note the progress made against the actions in the one-year High Streets' Priority Plan
2. make comments on the proposed options for a new plan to March 2024 or 2025.

The Cabinet Member for Business and Culture provided the committee with details from a recent presentation given by the Winchester Business Improvement District (BID) regarding current High Street footfall and shop vacancy rates.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised:

1. the risk of losing focus on the broader district if this plan were to be incorporated into other strategies in the future
2. the plans for the promotion and support to areas on the edges of the city
3. the inclusion of Whiteley within the priority plan
4. the proposed consultation strands concerning the distribution of the shared prosperity fund and associated timescales.

These points were responded to by Cabinet Member for Business and Culture and the Service Lead - Economy & Tourism accordingly and were noted by the cabinet members present at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

that the Cabinet Member and officers note the comments of the committee.

11. **WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23 (BHP032)**

RESOLVED:

Following discussion, the committee put forward several items for inclusion in the work programme which Mr Botham agreed to discuss with the relevant officers and cabinet members. The items were:

1. the sustainable tourism strategy
2. the review of street markets
3. the cultural strategy
4. a presentation regarding global entrepreneurship week
5. the renewal of the housing cleaning contract
6. the new homes strategy
7. the void standards review
8. the estate improvement plan
9. the review of tenant involvement and engagement.

12. **TO NOTE THE DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE**

The following dates were noted:

1. 29 Sep 2022 6.30 pm
2. 29 Nov 2022 6.30 pm
3. 28 Feb 2023 6.30 pm.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 9.00 pm

Chairperson