

ECONOMY AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 20 February 2024

Attendance:

Councillors
Batho (Chairperson)

Chamberlain
Eve

Miller
Power

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Isaacs and Prest

Deputy Members:

Councillor S Achwal (as deputy for Councillor Prest) and Councillor Horrill (as deputy for Councillor Isaacs)

Other members in attendance:

Councillor Westwood and Councillor Thompson.

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

1. Councillor Horrill declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest due to her husband being a board member of Trinity.
2. Councillor Westwood declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest due to being the council nominated representative to Trinity and the Winchester Beacon.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No announcements were made.

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2023**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 28 November 2023 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Chairperson advised that the following had registered to speak at the meeting:

1. Agenda item 6 – Tony Goldsby on behalf of Trinity Winchester, and Tracy Jones on behalf of the Winchester Beacon.
2. Agenda item 8 – Councillor Wallace
3. Agenda item 9 – Monica Gill on behalf of Tenants and Council Together (TACT) who had registered to speak but was subsequently unable to attend and so a written submission had been received.

These contributions were summarised within the following agenda items.

6. **ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY FOR HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS**

Councillor Chris Westwood, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, ref EHP48 which set out proposals for the “Accommodation Strategy for Homeless Households”, ([available here](#)). The introduction included the following points.

1. He highlighted the national increase in homelessness, with councils in England spending £1.7 billion annually on temporary housing.
2. That Hampshire County Council's spending review to save £132 million, would affect social inclusion services in the district.
3. That Winchester City Council was committed to preventing and relieving homelessness through partnerships with organisations like Trinity and the Winchester Beacon.
4. The district's efficient use of housing stock to keep bed and breakfast usage low, amidst concerns over rising homelessness and potential funding cuts.
5. The report aimed to assess the projected level of homelessness in the district and explore options for managing this growth and its financial impact on the Council.

Karen Thorburn, Service Lead - Strategic Housing provided the committee with an update which included the following:

1. She highlighted the projections based on past and future demands for temporary accommodation, as shown in Appendix 2 of the report.
2. That without adopting new strategies or exploring alternatives, the shortfall in bed spaces could reach 139, significantly impacting both the council's finances and individuals facing homelessness.
3. That the potential financial burden of emergency accommodation was discussed, with costs ranging from just under £80,000 for short stays to nearly half a million pounds for longer stays in bed and breakfast accommodation.

4. Several options were presented to bridge the gap, including the potential management changes of Sussex St to provide additional bed spaces, and revising the move-on policy to accelerate the transition of households from temporary accommodation.
5. Other strategies included support for Trinity to convert spaces for additional accommodation, reviewing the letting strategy for sheltered accommodation, and utilising Eastacre for shared temporary accommodation.
6. The report also considered the financial and operational implications of each option and outlined the next steps, including responding to budget consultations and revising policies to manage the costs of emergency accommodation.
7. The importance of stakeholder and resident consultations as part of a comprehensive strategy to address homelessness, and that the intention was to present a full accommodation strategy to the Cabinet Committee: Housing later this year.

Tony Goldsby, on behalf of Trinity, addressed the committee and highlighted the following points.

1. That the closure of key support facilities, Westview and Sussex St. was regretted.
2. He wanted to commit to overcoming the challenges posed by these closures and supported the strategies outlined by the report.
3. That Trinity wished to expand its provision of quality housing with comprehensive support services, emphasising the critical role of support in successful housing and community integration.
4. He referred to the introduction of a project which aimed to establish emergency overnight rooms and was currently seeking planning approval to provide immediate relief to the issues discussed.
5. He advised of efforts to secure additional accommodation through land donations, working in collaboration with local authorities and stakeholders.
6. He stressed the importance of an integrated approach with local charities, shelter workers, and Winchester City Council to enable change and address these issues with holistic support services.

Tracy Jones, on behalf of the Winchester Beacon, addressed the committee and highlighted the following points.

1. She referred to the Beacon's support for the housing team's efforts despite limited resources and the adverse impact of Hampshire County Council's spending review.
2. She referred to the introduction of a resettlement coach to aid residents' transition to permanent housing, emphasising the importance of sustained support to prevent a return to homelessness.

3. She advised of plans to expand the Beacon's support by providing additional beds and associated services, highlighting the efficiency of smaller support units in managing local impact and antisocial behaviour.
4. She acknowledged the crucial role of volunteers in supplementing the charity's efforts and reducing costs for both the charity and the council.
5. She appealed for a collaborative and integrated approach to explore beyond the outlined options, emphasising the need for broader stakeholder engagement in addressing homelessness and support services.

The Chairperson thanked Tony Goldsby and Tracy Jones for their contributions and expressed appreciation for the contributions of the Winchester Beacon, Trinity and Emmaus in supporting Winchester City Council's efforts to address homelessness and temporary accommodation challenges.

He also advised of an additional representation in the form of a petition from residents near Milford House and a letter from Mr Terry Butler a close neighbour to the scheme, which the officer team had received and would address during the consultation.

The committee was asked to review and provide comments on the options available to address predicted homelessness demand, noting that these will be subject to consultation before agreement at Cabinet Committee: Housing. The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. Clarification was sought regarding the potential for sharing responsibilities to alleviate the burden on the proposed additional staff member and to increase the resilience of the service.
2. Understanding the typical occupancy rates of temporary accommodation facilities and how these aligned with demand and availability.
3. Evaluating the potential impacts of the proposed options on the council's ability to effectively address homelessness, considering the balance between available resources, and increasing needs for accommodation and support services.
4. Understanding the contributions of partner charities and other organisations in expanding accommodation and support services for homeless individuals and families, and whether additional collaborations could enhance the district's capacity.
5. Questions were raised to understand more about the comprehensive support services ("wrap-around services") necessary beyond just providing accommodation, which aimed to support individuals on their journey towards sustaining tenancies.
6. Clarification regarding the financial implications of the proposed strategies, specifically about anticipated funding reductions and the potential necessity of utilising reserves to bridge gaps in service provision.

7. The committee sought an understanding of managing expectations and communications with residents currently on the waiting list for accommodation, in the context of potential policy changes affecting their queue positions.
8. Understanding the sustainability of funding for homelessness services through grants and reserves, with a particular interest in how these resources would support the proposed options and initiatives amidst financial uncertainties.

These points were responded to by Karen Thorburn, Service Lead, Strategic Housing, Simon Hendey, Strategic Director and Councillor Westwood, Cabinet Member for Housing accordingly.

RESOLVED:

The committee:

1. Noted the increasing issue of homelessness and the associated issues raised.
2. Thanked Trinity, the Winchester Beacon and Emmaus for their contributions to addressing homelessness in Winchester.
3. Thanked the officer team for their work in this area and anticipated further reports to be brought back for discussion.
4. Asked that the cabinet member consider the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

7. WINCHESTER DISTRICT CULTURAL STRATEGY (PRESENTATION)

Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture, Andrew Gostelow, Service Lead - Economy & Tourism and Emalene Hickman, Culture and Creative Sector Development Officer introduced the agenda item which set out proposals for the Winchester District Cultural Strategy, ([available here](#)). The introduction was accompanied by a presentation and included the following points.

1. The strategy aimed to develop, promote, and celebrate Winchester's cultural offerings, highlighting a year-long journey from conception to conclusion.
2. A collaborative team was formed to ensure ongoing development and implementation of the strategy, which aimed for broader community engagement and support beyond the council.
3. Partnership and collaboration were identified as core to the strategy's success, focusing on building a robust and resilient cultural and creative sector through stakeholder engagement and shared values.
4. The strategy's priorities were designed to address the district's unique cultural and economic landscape, aiming for inclusive, ambitious, and environmentally responsible cultural development.

5. Specific goals by 2030 included establishing a youth-led cultural movement, harnessing placemaking for community pride, expanding events and festivals, and bolstering the economy and creative industries.
6. Themes of environmental responsibility, health and well-being, and inclusion and diversity were integrated across all priorities to ensure a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach.
7. Investment and financial resilience were highlighted as critical for the sector's sustainability, with suggestions for collective funding initiatives and partnership with the corporate sector.
8. The strategy aligned with national and regional cultural initiatives, emphasising local collaboration and broad stakeholder engagement to inform its development and implementation.
9. The next steps would involve seeking feedback for the strategy's adoption by the Cabinet on March 14th, 2024, followed by the development of detailed action plans across themes and priorities to achieve the strategy's objectives by 2030.

The committee was asked to review and comment on the direction of the strategy including the vision, values, themes and priorities. The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. The evaluation of current activities against identified themes and their geographic distribution across the district, especially considering perceptions of a “Winchester-centric” cultural offer.
2. Clarification regarding the breadth of organisations consulted to ensure the inclusion and diversity theme was thoroughly enabled and whether educational sector inputs beyond tertiary institutions had been sought to support the overall strategy.
3. Clarification on the approach to scaling cultural activities, questioning whether there was support for significant events and initiatives to grow, including potential strategies for attracting major creative industries to the district.
4. Some concern was raised that the current number of events and festivals might undervalue the district's cultural offerings and that a broader acknowledgement of community events and activities was appropriate.
5. Discussion on the formation and governance of a forum ensuring a diverse stakeholder mix to achieve the strategy's objectives.
6. Suggestions for establishing clear success indicators for the forum, emphasising the importance of strategic mobility, joint funding bids, and broader PR activities to showcase the district's cultural and creative sector.

7. Whether officers could recirculate the “request for events” document.
8. Consideration of creating a formal constitution for the forum to address governance and the equitable distribution of potential funding, recognising the varied needs of Winchester's city and rural areas.

These points were responded to by Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture, Andrew Gostelow, Service Lead - Economy & Tourism and Emalene Hickman, Culture and Creative Sector Development Officer accordingly.

RESOLVED:

The committee agreed to ask the Cabinet Member to consider the following:

1. That the strategy fully reflects activities across the entire district and ensures that the scope and scale of various activities were compatible with each other.
2. The need for clear governance mechanisms for the overseeing forum, particularly a transparent process that ensured the strategy's objectives were progressively achieved.
3. That an ongoing review process be established to monitor the strategy's effectiveness and adapt as necessary to meet the evolving cultural needs of the district.
4. That the cabinet member considers the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

8. **GREEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2024/27**

Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture, introduced the report ref EHP50, outlining the proposals for the Green Economic Development Strategy (GEDS) Action Plan 2024/27 ([available here](#)). The introduction included the following points:

1. The strategy offered a framework aimed at guiding the district's economic development over the next decade, aligning with the Council's goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
2. There was an emphasis on the Council Plan's objective to foster a vibrant local economy by seising green growth opportunities. The strategy set out these opportunities and detailed actions for the Council and its partners to promote green growth within the district.
3. There would be an evaluation of the accomplishments from the past two years and an assessment of the changing landscape, influenced by the pandemic, international conflicts, inflation, and the cost of living crisis.

4. She stressed the importance of maintaining the agility of the strategy and its operational plans amidst these evolving circumstances, ensuring that the core themes of GEDS remain relevant and actionable.
5. It was proposed to review the governance arrangements surrounding GEDS to facilitate effective implementation. The establishment of a Winchester District Climate and Green Economy Partners forum was proposed, with a new set of terms of reference available in Appendix 1 of the report.

Councillor Malcolm Wallace addressed the committee and highlighted several points which could be summarised as follows:

1. He welcomed the integration of green aims throughout the GEDS, acknowledging the strategy's alignment with environmental objectives.
2. That there were concerns about the strategy's connectivity to other council strategies, specifically the integration with the Council Plan and the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan (CNAP).
3. Regarding governance arrangements, he suggested inviting cross-party representatives to the Climate and Green Economy Partners Forum to foster collaborative work.
4. He was concerned about the transparency and public accessibility of the Carbon Neutrality Action Board's meetings and minutes and asked for their availability to members and the public.
5. He emphasised the need for efficient resource utilisation to achieve the Council's net-zero target by 2030, suggesting a revision of the report to include SMART goals for clearer direction and accountability.

These points were responded to by Susan Robbins, Corporate Head of Economy & Community and Andrew Gostelow, Service Lead - Economy & Tourism accordingly.

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

1. Clarification was sought regarding the graph on page 90 depicting the percentage of energy-efficient houses in the district and how this percentage was determined for houses that had not been sold for some time.
2. The necessity for indicators within the documents to quantify the delivery mechanisms, often beyond the Council's direct control, and suggesting the inclusion of useful indicators from the report to observe changes over time.

3. Resolving the tension between biodiversity and food security, particularly considering the current emphasis on “Regeneration” and Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF) exemplar Farms and querying how these practices could be expanded across the food production sector in the district.
4. The challenges posed by a lack of infrastructure, such as electricity and wastewater services, and questioning the feasibility of incorporating ambitious objectives within the strategy given the practical constraints.
5. Clarification was sought on the governance structure presented on page 73, regarding the Economy and Housing Policy Committee's oversight of two forums without apparent representation from Winchester City Council.
6. That the local plan should be linked to the GEDS to ensure job provision aligns with housing developments, especially in rural areas, to minimise carbon emissions associated with commuting.
7. Whether other parishes undertook similar work to identify employment opportunities in conjunction with housing developments as part of the local plan.
8. The absence of certain business organisations, such as the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, from the “partnership wheel” and the potential for broader councillor involvement as raised by Councillor Wallace.

These points were responded to by Susan Robbins, Corporate Head of Economy & Community and Andrew Gostelow, Service Lead - Economy & Tourism accordingly and Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture.

RESOLVED:

The Committee:

1. Noted the effort in amalgamating a wide array of underlying policies and documentation that influenced the green economic development of the district.
2. Noted the complexity of the GEDS, considering the multitude of partners involved and the various external factors affecting its implementation, underscoring the need for a balanced and nuanced approach to measuring success and progress.
3. Emphasised the importance of including indicators that reflected the general direction of the policy but also narrowed down to specific areas where the Council had a direct impact, ensuring the ability to track Winchester City Council's contributions effectively.
4. That the cabinet member considers the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

9. **SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR THE OLDER PERSONS ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY - INITIAL THOUGHTS.**

Councillor Chris Westwood, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, ref EHP49 which was a scoping document for the Older Persons Accommodation Strategy, ([available here](#)). The introduction included the following points.

1. That almost 11 million people in the UK were aged 65 and over, representing 19% of the population, with 3.3 million of these individuals living alone.
2. It was noted that nearly 65% of those aged 70 and over reported being in good health, which dropped to less than 50% by age 80 and further reduced to less than 30% by age 90.
3. He emphasised the increased prevalence of age-related health concerns, including mental health conditions such as dementia, and loneliness exacerbated by families being more geographically spread.
4. That there was a national, social care crisis which impacted families, and it was important to address this complex issue both nationally and locally.
5. He acknowledged the financial strain on Hampshire County Council in meeting adult social care needs and emphasised the importance of reviewing the impact of an ageing population in the Winchester District.
6. The proposed review would include how to meet the accommodation needs and aspirations of older persons in the district across all tenures, outlining an approach in the paper to understand future requirements.

In addition, Karen Thorburn, Service Lead - Strategic Housing provided the committee with the following information:

1. That the definition of 'older persons' for this review was anyone over the age of 55.
2. She highlighted the necessity for the council to adapt to changing accommodation needs for older persons, acknowledging significant shifts in policy and older individuals' aspirations since the last full assessment in 2015.
3. That older persons' accommodation encompassed a wide spectrum, from owner-occupiers to those living in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs), not just council or retirement homes.
4. That local demographic data and statistics from the housing register illustrated the accommodation needs of older persons, noting that many over 55s were in insecure housing, which might not be adaptable as their needs change.

5. She emphasised the goal of providing sufficient, affordable, and appropriate accommodation that was future-proofed and offered a choice, aligning with the ten HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) principles.
6. She outlined the need for a thorough review of the market and current policies, and an extensive evidence review, as detailed in section 3.1 of the strategy document.
7. She advised of plans for a broad and meaningful engagement and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including Hampshire County Council, landlords, the council's disabled facilities grants team, private treatment home providers, residents, councillors, and parish councils, utilising various forums and consultation methods.

The Chairperson advised that Monica Gill, Vice Chair of Tenants and Council Together (TACT), was unable to attend, and so a written statement from her would be shared as follows :

1. She expressed her agreement with the report's recommendations, emphasising the importance of consulting with older tenants before finalising plans.
2. She highlighted a specific issue where previous installations of new fire doors, led to problems for tenants with mobility issues or those using wheelchairs, due to the quick closing mechanism of the doors not allowing sufficient time to safely enter or exit their properties.

The committee was asked to note the report and were asked to comment on the proposed and emerging priorities for the Older Person's Accommodation Strategy 2024-2029, which were listed within the report.

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

1. Confirmation was sought on whether the consultation process would encompass the entire district, reflecting the detailed demographic split outlined in the report.
2. There was a request for a comprehensive dataset to support the strategy, highlighting a need for insight into the district's demographic profiles and the specific needs of different age groups.
3. The necessity for more information about other accommodation providers, such as St. John's, was raised to ensure a holistic view of available options and their integration into the strategy.
4. Questions were raised about the evolution of older persons' care, including what constitutes good practice for future care provision and how Hampshire County Council's vision aligns with these standards.

5. Interest was expressed in exploring models of care and accommodation that promote independence and reduce social isolation, using examples like the Brendoncare model in Chandlers Ford.
6. Concerns about the progression of needs related to social isolation and the ability of current housing solutions to adapt to changing circumstances were discussed.
7. Whether the projected increase in the population of older age groups within the district was due to natural ageing or other factors, such as migration.
8. The importance of aligning planning policies to meet the specific needs of older residents was emphasised, suggesting a proactive approach in the local plan development to ensure suitable accommodation solutions.

These points were responded to by Karen Thorburn, Service Lead - Strategic Housing, Sarah Wallis, Housing and Social Inclusion Manager and Councillor Westwood, Cabinet member for Housing accordingly.

RESOLVED:

The Committee:

1. Acknowledged the comprehensive nature of the work required to address the accommodation needs of the older population, noting the necessity to consider a wide range of accommodation types across the district.
2. Asks that the cabinet member consider the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

10. **TO NOTE THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR FEBRUARY 2024**

RESOLVED:

The current work programme was noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 9.10 pm

Chairperson