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BUSINESS AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 30 November 2021

Attendance:

Councillors
Weir (Chairperson)

Fern
Bronk
Craske

Isaacs
Lumby

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Radcliffe and Scott

Deputy Members:

Councillor Ferguson (as deputy for Councillor Radcliffe)

Other members in attendance:

Councillors Clear, Cutler and Learney

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

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies from committee members were noted as above.

2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Lumby declared a non-pecuniary interest concerning items upon the agenda that may be related to his role as a County Councillor.

3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2021**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 21 September 2021 be approved and adopted.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

David Chafe and David Light of Tenants and Council Together (TACT) spoke regarding agenda item 5 – “Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy”. They advised that TACT supported the proposal regarding the provision of fire doors in the medium-rise flats at Winnall as ultimately it would improve the safety of residents. Regarding bathrooms, they felt that the replacement period should be reduced. On the wider issues described within the Asset Management Strategy, they advised that they were meeting with officers shortly to review the report in greater detail.

5. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**
(Report Ref BHP021 and CAB3264)

The Corporate Head of Housing introduced the report and provided the committee with an overview of the rationale of producing the strategy and its key aspects. Members were advised that its purpose was to ensure the council made the best use of its housing stock for current and future housing needs. The three big challenges for the council’s housing stock were summarised as the safety of homes, reducing carbon emissions of homes, and increasing the supply of local, affordable homes. The Corporate Head of Housing advised that the strategy would be presented to Cabinet in 2022 and officers sought the committee's views regarding the priorities and principles of the HRA Asset Management Strategy and specifically

- a) The Asset Management Strategy’s overall outcomes (section 11.3 of the report)
- b) The criteria for disposals and acquisitions. Where an asset was identified in the first instance as being surplus to requirements that it be appraised through an options appraisal and an asset was assessed for purchase using the acquisition eligibility criteria. (section 16.4 of the report)
- c) The proposal to fund the provision of fire door sets to leasehold properties in the medium-rise flats at Winnall (section 16.2 of the report)

The committee asked questions on a range of subjects including:

- whether there was adequate provision to meet the costs for retrofit of energy efficiency & carbon reduction measures.
- clarifying the policy regarding the needs of older persons and accessible bathrooms.
- concern over the ability to acquire and/or develop sites in rural areas.
- liaising with South Down National Park Authority (SDNPA) concerning the availability of land.
- creating green and open spaces to form part of this strategy.
- consideration to be given to buying land to assist with nitrate mitigation.
- did the strategy make specific reference to climate change challenges?

- demand levels increasing above expected numbers following the next intake of students with the University of Southampton.
- within the disposal criteria, what action would we take on a property that we were disposing of because of the costs to improve its carbon efficiency were too great?
- within the disposal criteria, the criteria that refers to “unsuitable for future needs of the council” – could this be amended to also say “and also couldn’t be made suitable for future needs of the council”?
- whether in rural areas that housing allocation and local demand be closer aligned to local need.
- awareness of schemes and models that had the potential for external partners to forward fund carbon reduction measures within new build properties.
- balancing the requests for adaptations that may give rise to cases of under occupancy.
- the current housing provision and support for older residents with mental health issues.

On the specific proposal regarding fire doors at Winnall, the following questions and comments were made:

- what are the obligations of leaseholders?
- is this approach being undertaken elsewhere in the district?
- why is WCC prioritising the medium rise blocks at Winnall?
- what is the value of the door?
- what are the disadvantages of an updated lease - could the benefits of the updated lease be added to the cabinet paper?
- could the door be changed even if an invitation to vary the lease was declined?

The questions were responded to by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Quality and officers accordingly.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Cabinet Member and officers note the comments of the committee
- b) that the overall outcomes of the strategy were noted, and specific reference was made to the importance and challenges of the retrofit programme and how this could kickstart activity in the private sector
- c) that the criteria for disposals and acquisition were noted with specific reference being made to the importance of bathroom replacements
- d) that the committee had general support for the proposal to fund fire doors as outlined in the report

6. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT HIGH STREETS' PRIORITY PLAN – UP-DATE AND PROGRESS REPORT**
(Report BHP023)

The Corporate Head of Economy & Community introduced the item and provided the committee with an overview of the contents of the report. The report provided the committee with an updated High Streets Priority Plan, a progress report on its delivery and a forward plan of activity to be delivered under the plan to March 2022. The report sought to update the committee on these points and asked the committee to make comments and provide direction on the proposed forward plan of work to March 2022.

The committee asked questions on a range of subjects including:

- difficulties experienced by market towns in accessing the relevant funding.
- the “5 things to do” campaign.
- the confidence of getting all actions done in the timescales set.
- the measures of success being used.
- the reduction in use of the car park in Wickham.
- promotion/awareness of Busket Yard and the potential use of Busket Yard as part of the lights festival.
- the food market.
- comparator plans for when updates were provided.
- the awareness and performance of "shopappy".
- the reach of the radio advert.
- the appearance of some of the public realm and its impact to visitors to the city.

The questions were responded to by the Corporate Head of Economy & Community.

RESOLVED:

The committee agreed:

- a) to thank officers for their support to local businesses and welcome the additional resources to the team.
- b) that the committee's comments be noted
- c) that an update on “shopappy” and the digital islands be provided at the March 2022 meeting of the committee

7. **DIGITAL UPDATE - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Chairperson provided a verbal update on behalf of the task and finish group. On 23 November 2021, the group hosted an open conversation attended by over sixty participants which discussed the four key topics of infrastructure, access, opportunity, and future potential. A summary of the discussions would be available on the city council's website. Several outcomes were identified which particularly related to reliable connectivity, digital change impacting local and national growth, that a digital divide exists in the district, whilst online retail was vital residents valued the high street. The Chairperson advised that the group would report back again to this committee. Members raised several points following the update which related to access and connectivity issues in their wards.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the update be noted
- b) That Councillor Bronk become a member of the task and finish group.

8. **TO NOTE THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021/22**

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.30 pm

Chairperson

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