

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 30 January 2019

Attendance:

Councillors:

Ashton (Chairman for the meeting)

Brook

Godfrey

Other Invited Councillors:

Berry
Power

Scott

TACT:

Mr M Fawcitt
Mrs M Gill

Deputies in attendance:

Councillors Ashton (deputy for Councillor Horrill) and Godfrey (deputy for Councillor Miller)

Apologies:

Councillors Horrill and Miller
Councillor Izard

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That, in the absence of Councillor Horrill, Councillor Ashton be elected Chairman for the meeting.

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2018**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Cabinet (Housing) Committee held 21 November 2018 be approved and adopted.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait spoke regarding Report CAB3111(HSG) as summarised under the relevant minute below.

3. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET 2019/20 AND BUSINESS PLAN**

(Report CAB3111(HSG) refers)

Ian Tait addressed the Committee during public participation. In summary, he requested clarification of the strategic land purchases referred to in the report as he believed that the Council should be seeking to purchase land for the purpose of building more affordable housing. In addition, he requested further details about the reference to care provision in relation to Barton Farm in the Business Plan.

The Strategic Director - Services (Interim) and Head of Housing Finance introduced the report and responded to Members' questions as summarised below.

In response to comments made by Mr Tait, the Strategic Director explained that the Government's removal of the debt cap removed the requirement for the bid for additional headline borrowing referred to in the report. At the current time, the Council did not have any specific proposals to purchase land but this was the intention in the future, subject to being able to demonstrate affordability and prudential borrowing.

The Strategic Director advised that the report had been considered by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 January 2019 where Members had generally supported its contents, but had raised a number of matters they believed required further attention:

- Increase in cost of voids;
- Future use of garages and implications on availability of storage;
- Requirement for rural housing.

In response to a query raised by Members of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Strategic Director confirmed that the Council had built more new homes than had been sold under "right to buy" since 2012 and full details could be made available to Members.

The Head of Housing Finance highlighted that the report demonstrated that the Council could deliver 1000 new housing units over the next 10 years. It also set aside additional funding for fire safety and to mitigate the impact of the roll out of universal credit. He advised Members of a minor amendment required to the Capital Programme Funding table contained as Appendix 5 of the report as follows:

2018/19 Forecast column:

- HRA Revenue Contributions to Capital - £2.343m (not £2.839m)
- Major Repairs Reserve - £4.687m (not £4.191m)

On behalf of TACT, Monica Gill supported the report and thanked the Head of Housing Finance for attending a recent meeting of TACT to present its contents.

In response to questions, the Strategic Director acknowledged that building new homes on Council owned land was likely to offer best value. However, it was possible to achieve good value on private land purchased by the Council and the Council would be examining different options to achieve this, for example including a mix of tenures. The Strategic Director clarified that the target to provide 1000 new affordable homes by 2029 replaced the previous target to provide 600 new homes by 2020.

The Strategic Director confirmed that the proposed housing numbers had been discussed with Officers in the Local Plan team who were content with its fitting with other housing targets within the Plan. The exact mix of housing was likely to be a mixture of affordable housing (ie 70-80% rent levels) and shared ownership. Housing for social rent was not currently provided for within the Business Plan but could be a matter for future discussion should Members wish.

During discussion, there was some debate amongst Members about encouraging parish councils to support additional affordable homes in rural areas. However, it was recognised that parish councils were broadly supportive but it was sometimes difficult to persuade local residents of the requirements.

In general, Members welcomed the report and commended Officers for the work involved in producing.

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

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

That it be recommended to Council:

- 1. That the 2019/20 Housing Revenue Account budget and final forecast for 2018/19 as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report be approved.**
- 2. That the HRA Capital Programme for 2018/19 to 2028/29, as set out in Appendix 3 & 4 to the report, be approved.**
- 3. That the proposed fire safety provision of £1m in 2019/20 identified in 11.5 be approved.**
- 4. That in 2019/20, the HRA continues to include a provision of £100k to mitigate against the impact of the universal credit rollout throughout the district.**
- 5. That authority be given to incur capital expenditure in 2019/20 of £9.046m for the Maintenance, Improvement and Renewal programme as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, in accordance**

with Financial Procedure Rule 6.4 (noting that within this, for any schemes in excess of £100,000, a financial appraisal will be approved in accordance with the scheme of delegations), be approved.

6. That authority be given to incur capital expenditure in 2019/20 of £22.407m for the New Build programme as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report, in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 6.4 (noting that within this, for any schemes in excess of £100,000, a financial appraisal will be approved in accordance with the scheme of delegations), be approved.

7. That the proposed funding for the HRA Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix 5, including the additional borrowing requirement, be approved.

8. That the HRA Business Plan operating account extract, including annual working balances as detailed in Appendix 6, be approved.

RESOLVED:

9. That delegated authority be given to the Corporate Head of Housing, in consultation with the Strategic Director (Resources), Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, to make adjustments to the overall Maintenance, Improvement and Renewal programme as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, including the flexibility to substitute projects and re-balance expenditure within and between the different elements/schemes in order to meet operational needs, changing priorities and commitment targets, with any changes being reported to Committee at the earliest opportunity.

3. **TENANCY STRATEGY UPDATE** (Report CAB3113(HSG) refers)

The Strategic Director: Services (Interim) and Head of Housing Options & Allocations (Interim) introduced the Report and emphasised it was a refresh of the previously agreed Strategy. It was also noted that Registered Providers also refer to the Strategy.

On behalf of TACT, Monica Gill supported the report and thanked the Head of Housing Options & Allocations (Interim) for attending a recent meeting of TACT to present its contents.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Tenancy Strategy be approved, as attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

3. **TENANCY POLICY**
(Report CAB3114(HSG) refers)

The Strategic Director: Services (Interim) and Head of Housing Management introduced the report and responded to questions as summarised below.

On behalf of TACT, Monica Gill supported the report and thanked the Head of Housing Management for attending a recent meeting of TACT to present its contents. She welcomed the decision not to introduce either flexible fixed term tenancies or “pay to stay” provisions.

The Head of Housing Management confirmed that the Council had an incentive scheme to encourage tenants to downsize and approximately 50 households took this option each year. The Council would continue to work with TACT to promote the downsizing option in order to free up larger homes. The Strategic Director: Services advised that the provision of new alternative smaller dwellings was an important consideration for the Council in deciding on its new affordable home provision.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Tenancy Policy 2018-2023 be approved as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

4. **RENTAL EXCHANGE INITIATIVE**
(Report CAB3115(HSG) refers)

The Strategic Director: Services (Interim) and Income Services Manager introduced the report and responded to questions as summarised below.

On behalf of TACT, Michael Fawcitt supported the report and thanked the Income Services Manager for attending a recent meeting of TACT to present its contents.

The Income Services Manager confirmed that Experian do have the highest level of data security. A tenant would have to be at least two months in arrears before it was flagged up on the Rental Exchange system but tenants in arrears would not be automatically excluded. The Strategic Director emphasised that the Council had a robust approach to arrears with tenants being contacted at an early stage.

The Income Services Manager confirmed that tenants would automatically be enrolled into the scheme unless they decided to opt out. Officers would work

with the Council's Communications Team to maximise awareness amongst tenants.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council's Housing Services participate in the Rental Exchange.
2. That the Council set up a regular data feed with Experian as managers of the Rental Exchange thereby improving the housing circumstances of vulnerable and excluded households and supporting our residents with the impact of welfare reform.

5. **TENANT INVOLVEMENT – APPRECIATION AND INCENTIVE SCHEME**
(Report CAB3110(HSG) refers)

The Strategic Director: Services (Interim) and Head of Housing Policy and Projects introduced the report and responded to questions as summarised below.

The Head of Housing Policy and Projects emphasised that the Council continued to appreciate the input from TACT, but the scheme was intended to encourage other tenants, including those from younger households to participate in consultation. In response to concerns that tenants who were not able to access the internet would be excluded, she confirmed that in most cases, digital surveys would be used in addition to other methods of consultation. Similarly, the Digital Readers' Panel would operate alongside the existing Readers' Panel.

On behalf of TACT, Michael Fawcitt supported the report and thanked the Head of Housing Policy and Projects for attending a recent meeting of TACT to present its contents.

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

RESOLVED:

That the incentive scheme be approved as set out in the report.

The meeting commenced at 4.30pm and concluded at 5.50pm

Chairman