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BUSINESS AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Attendance:

Councillors
Bronk (Chairperson)

Fern
Cramoysan
Horrill

Isaacs
Radcliffe
Small

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Miller

Deputy Members:

Councillor Brook (as deputy for Councillor Miller)

Other members in attendance:

Councillors Ferguson and Thompson

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were made.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson provided an update on items discussed at the previous meeting, which included the following.

1. The Tourism Strategy.
2. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
3. The Housing Strategy.
4. The Disabled Facilities Grants paper.
5. The Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Task and Finish Group.

It was noted that officers now intended to bring the updated Housing Strategy to the committee in the next municipal year. It was also noted that the committee would consider, as part of its new work plan the issues around a HMO task and finish group and the council's policy regarding the installation of showers within its housing stock.

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2022**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 November 2022 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait addressed the committee regarding agenda item 6 - Draft Housing Tenant Engagement and Communication Plan and a summary of the matters he raised were as follows.

1. That he felt the paper should be discussed at the Cabinet Committee: Housing as he believed that it was a relevant matter for that committee.
2. That tenant engagement was essential and cited both the Grenfell tragedy and the Awaab Ishak case as examples of this.
3. That good housing management meant tenant concerns needed to be taken seriously.
4. That Tenants And Council Together (TACT) played a vital role in achieving excellent tenant engagement, but the council needed to vary the way it communicates and listens to its tenants; and whilst social media is important, a move away from only a corporate approach may be beneficial.
5. That the council went through a housing options process 12 years ago, which utilised the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) who were expert in tenancy engagement.
6. That the officer report showed an excellent understanding of the challenges of ensuring good engagement.
7. That he felt that the changes to area housing officers had not been as beneficial as initially hoped.

Councillor Paula Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing thanked Mr Tait for his contribution and responded to his points, which could be summarised as follows.

1. She believed the committee's discussion of the draft report this evening would address many of his points, particularly greater face-to-face engagement and listening better.
2. The issue of TPAS and the independent review is addressed in the draft report, and an independent review of the draft strategy is planned with feedback from tenants.
3. The issue of area managers was being addressed, with the recruitment of staff.
4. She agreed that the council needed to engage with tenants in a variety of ways.
5. The draft plan aimed to allow tenants to tell the council their thoughts and make sure they are listened to in all appropriate settings.

David Light, Chair of Tenants And Council Together (TACT) addressed the committee regarding agenda item 6 - Draft Housing Tenant Engagement and Communication Plan and a summary of the matters he raised is as follows.

1. He wanted to see more younger people and people from different ethnic minorities engaged with TACT.
2. He looked forward to the council providing all the items described in the engagement plan.
3. He believed that the council and TACT work together in a positive way to achieve these goals.

Councillor Paula Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing and Janette Palmer, Housing Policy and Projects Manager responded to his points, which could be summarised as follows.

1. That the plan did focus on underrepresented groups and how to specifically engage with them.
2. The council will need to allocate resources to reach currently underrepresented groups.
3. The draft report highlights the importance of feedback and involvement from all teams within the council's housing service.
4. That it was important to empower both tenants and staff to have conversations and bring back feedback for service improvement.
5. That the resources needed may not just come from the tenant involvement team, but from all teams within the housing service.

6. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT CULTURAL STRATEGY - SCOPING**

Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture introduced the report, ref BHP041 which set out proposals for the Winchester District Cultural Strategy (available here). Simon Jutton, representing Arts Council England then addressed the committee and informed members of his role and of the work of Arts Council England, particularly its strategy "Let's Create" and the associated planned outcomes. Simon Jutton advised that Arts Council England would be supporting Winchester City Council throughout the development of its strategy.

Emalene Hickman, Culture and Creative Sector Development Officer and Andrew Gostelow, Service Lead - Economy & Tourism provided the committee with a detailed presentation regarding the development of the strategy. This included information regarding the local population, their cultural activity, local cultural organisations and event data, stakeholder engagement undertaken to date and the next steps.

The committee was recommended to review and comment on the anticipated policy direction of the strategy, as outlined in paragraphs 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.21 and 2.22 of the report and the approach outlined to deliver the strategy.

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

1. The relationship of sport as part of this strategy.
2. Improving access to leisure facilities as part of this strategy.
3. That clarity is needed when references to Winchester are made and clarifying whether this is the city or the district.

4. Improving how we could highlight and signpost our cultural facilities and historic activities, including those in rural areas of the district.
5. Could members be provided with the detail behind the data and the graphs in order to cross-reference against their local knowledge of facilities and events?
6. Was there a lack of low-cost space for workshops or cultural activities and a lack of exhibition space in the district and was this feeding through into other council workstreams?
7. Whether an audit of resources, that could leverage budgets from various places and assist this strategy had been undertaken.
8. Clarification over "One Great Win" as part of this strategy.
9. Clarifying the membership of the cultural stakeholder group.
10. Was there an aspiration to achieve cultural provision or activity within 15 minutes of residences?
11. A member's prior written question was accepted, which requested elaboration on how the new strategy intended to support the council's aim of going greener faster.

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

The Chairperson noted that a wide range of comments was made during the committee's discussion and drew particular attention to the following points.

1. There was some concern regarding the available resource for delivering the strategy and that collaboration and leverage would be necessary.
2. The committee welcomed the use of markers and information boards throughout the district and advocated collaboration with Parish councils for their introduction.
3. The committee believed that the provision of spaces for the many various activities covered by the strategy was a priority.

RESOLVED:

1. That members be provided with the data as per point five above.
2. That the cabinet member and officers note the comments of the committee.

7. **DRAFT HOUSING TENANT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION PLAN**
Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing and Janette Palmer, Housing Policy and Projects Manager introduced the report, ref BHP40 which set out proposals for the Draft Housing Tenant Engagement and Communication Plan, (available here).

The report set out the draft engagement plan (Appendix 3) that had been developed with tenants and officers following consultation and research. The committee was recommended to comment upon the content of the Tenant Engagement Plan.

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

1. That the responsibility for tenant engagement lay across all council departments and this should be reflected within this plan.
2. That engagement needed to reach out beyond tenants to encompass other residents of rented accommodation in the district.
3. There was a challenge in getting younger people and families to engage with the council and relevant communication channels should be tailored to maximise engagement opportunities with these groups.
4. The key difficulties in feeding back from individuals, for example, issues around the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and obtaining the express written consent of identified individuals.
5. Had all of the engagement options listed in paragraph 2.6 filtered through into the plan?
6. That it was vital all elements of service delivery to tenants were provided at a very high standard and the provision of the out-of-hours service was discussed further.
7. How as a council do we monitor subcontractor performance and improve the services to residents?

Gillian Knight, Corporate Head of Housing provided the committee with a presentation (available [here](#)) regarding the Social Housing White Paper - The Charter for Social Housing Residents, which covered the following topics.

1. To be safe in your home.
2. To know how your landlord was performing.
3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly & fairly.
4. To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants.
5. To have your voice heard by your landlord.
6. To have a good quality home & neighbourhood to live in.
7. To be supported to take your first step to ownership.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and the following matters were raised.

1. Would the council need to do more (in partnership with the police) to fulfil our duties within the white paper?
2. Did the requirements of the white paper introduce new burdens for the council and were there associated issues for designing a solution and resourcing it?

These points were responded to by Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing, Simon Hendey, Strategic Director, Gillian Knight, Corporate Head of Housing and Janette Palmer, Housing Policy

and Projects Manager, accordingly and were noted by Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing.

RESOLVED:

1. That a cross reference be provided between the items listed in paragraph 2.6 and the finalised plan and shared with members.
2. That Councillor Ferguson would consider whether this paper would be required to go to Cabinet Committee: Housing for further discussion and sign-off or whether this would be absorbed into the overall Housing Strategy paper.
3. That the committee wished to extend its appreciation to the Winchester City Council tenant who participates on the National Residents' Panel set up to improve tenant engagement and the regulation of the social housing sector.
4. That the cabinet member and officers note the comments of the committee.

8. **TO NOTE THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23**

The committee discussed the work programme for the next municipal year. It was agreed that the following items should be placed for discussion at the first meeting of the committee to potentially form part of the 2023/24 work plan.

1. The Housing Strategy.
2. Establishing a HMO task and finish group.
3. A review of the council's policy regarding the installation of showers within its housing stock.

Following an earlier question, Simon Hendey, Strategic Director, agreed to discuss with Cllr Issacs how residents with work and/or family connections could seek support from the council, including priority for available, affordable housing.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 9.15 pm

Chairperson