

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD:26 NOVEMBER 2015

Start: 7.30pm

Finish: 8.50pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Furey (Chairman)

Ashcroft	Mrs Houlgrave
Bullock	Kay
Cotterill	Mee
Davis	Nixon
Delaney	Owen
Devine	Pendleton
Forshaw	Westley
Greenall	

Officers: Deputy Assistant Director Housing & Regeneration (Mr I Gill)
Deputy Borough Treasurer (Mr M Kostrzewski)
Strategic Planning & Implementation Manager (Mr P Richards)
Property Services Manager (Mr P Holland)
Asset Manager (Mr W Berkley)
Assistant Solicitor (Mrs J Williams)
Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs C A Jackson)

In attendance: Assistant Solicitor (Mr N Astles)

22. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

23. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2, Members noted the termination of membership of Councillors Savage and Whittington and the appointment of Councillors Owen and Mee respectively, thereby giving effect to the wishes of the Political Groups.

24. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Delaney, Devine, Owen and Nixon declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 9(b) Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing – Consultation as tenants of the Council but by virtue of a dispensation, were able to remain to speak and vote on this item.

26. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of a Party Whip.

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27. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2015 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. RELEVANT MINUTES OF CABINET

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Cabinet held on 10 November 2015.

In relation to a query on the decision set down at Minute 53 (Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control), that the Council become a signatory to the Declaration, the Deputy Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration made an undertaking to seek confirmation that this had taken place.

29. CALL IN ITEMS

There were no items under this heading.

30. ITEMS REFERRED BY CABINET

The following two items had been referred.

31. SALE OF HIGH VALUE COUNCIL HOUSES

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Solicitor in relation to the report of the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration entitled 'Sale of High Value Council Houses' attached at Appendix 1, considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 10 November, that had sought the direction of them to progress with sales of "high value" Council houses when they become empty, prior to legislation being introduced. The matter had also been considered by the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) on 4 November 2015.

Cabinet, in referring the item, requested the Committee to provide any agreed comments to be submitted to them prior to consideration at its next Cabinet meeting on 12 January 2016.

The Deputy Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration gave an overview of the proposals, provided clarification on issues raised and responded to questions.

In discussion comments and questions were raised in relation to:

- Properties adapted for the disabled – "exemption" definition / criteria.
- Acting prior to the Housing Bill's enactment – advantages/disadvantages.
- Identification of "high value" housing stock – numbers; properties affected; values applied;
- Sale / disposal of "identified" properties – criteria (restrictions / selection / community assets / other social uses / value); associated legal implications.
- Advertisement / Marketing - process; use of in-house / external agents.
- Voids – number / timescales.

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The Assistant Solicitor (JW) and Property Services Manager also provided additional clarification on issues raised relating to community assets legislation and voids.

RESOLVED: As a consequence of the discussion on this item the agreed comments of the Committee to Cabinet be that:

1. the proposals are not supported at this time.
2. Cabinet reconsiders the lower values, in respect of the classification of “high value” properties, as set down at paragraph 4.3 of the report of the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration.
3. Cabinet explore further the options for disposal of “high value” properties, including social uses.
4. properties identified for sale, are “properly marketed.”

32. PAY TO STAY - FAIRER RENTS IN SOCIAL HOUSING - CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Solicitor in relation to the report of the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration entitled ‘Pay to Stay – Fairer Rents in Social Housing – Consultation’, considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 10 November, that gave details of the DCLG Consultation document ‘Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing’, and the draft response to that consultation. The matter had previously been considered by the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) on 4 November 2015.

Cabinet, in referring the matter, requested the Committee to refer any agreed comments by them to the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration and the relevant Portfolio Holder, prior to the response being finalised.

The Deputy Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration gave an overview of the report referring to detail as set down in the consultation document and the draft response prepared by the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration.

In discussion questions and comments were raised in relation to:

- Purpose of the legislation.
- Low income households – indirect impact of the proposals.
- “Household” Income – lack of clarity / identification/determination of “household” income; income thresholds; monitoring changes in circumstances; lack of flexibility;
- Self-employed / zero hours contracts – consequences.
- Administrative Costs – financial impact / mechanism to administer.
- Appeals Process – reinstatement of a ‘Fair Rents Council’

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RESOLVED: That, as a consequence of the discussion on this item the following agreed comments of the Committee, be passed to the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder for consideration of inclusion in the Council's response:

- (a) In relation to administering the policy, due to needing income data, "the system is unworkable" and
- (b) "include a reference to the effect on those people on zero hours contracts and the self-employed."

33. PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR THE PROVISION FOR TRAVELLER SITES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director Planning that gave details in relation to the preferred options for the provision of Traveller Sites Development Plan Document (Traveller Sites DPD) and sought agreed comments, following approval by Cabinet at its meeting on 10 November 2015 for consultation. The report had also been considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 12 November 2015.

The Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager attended the meeting and provided an overview of the Traveller Sites DPD, clarification on the issues raised and responded to questions, referring to details as set down in the report and Traveller Sites DPD.

In discussion, questions and comments were raised in respect of the following:

- Traveller accommodation needs.
- Proposed Preferred Options – Advantages / disadvantages of the 3 sites identified.
- Provision of suitable Traveller sites – work undertaken; liaison with landowners / neighbouring authorities; future identification; green belt (rules/ legal processes / definitions); availability of Council-owned land.

During the discussion reference was made to the allocated sites and disappointment was expressed at the insufficient number of sites that had come forward to meet Traveller accommodation needs, despite significant work to meet the target. It was, however, recognised that there could be opportunities in the future to re-visit this, when the process in relation to the next Local Plan, commenced.

Thanks was proffered to the Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager for the work undertaken to try to identify suitable sites and to bring the Traveller Sites DPD forward.

RESOLVED: That, as a consequence of the discussion on this item it was agreed that the following agreed comments be passed to the Assistant Director Planning for consideration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder that:

1. "when looking at future plans for suitable traveller sites, consultation with travelling communities and other local authorities be undertaken, in order to learn from their experience and

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2 concerns were expressed about the release of sites from the Green Belt to meet Traveller accommodation needs.”

34. REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND MID YEAR REVIEW 2015-2016

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer that provided details on the Revised Capital Programme for 2015/16 and an overview on the progress against it at the mid-year point and sought the views of the Committee prior to consideration by Council on 16 December 2015.

The Deputy Borough Treasurer attended the meeting, provided a summary on progress at the mid-year point, responded to questions and provided clarification referencing details as set down in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Revised Capital Programme and progress against it at the mid-year point be noted.

35. HRA BUDGET MONITORING POSITION

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer that provided a projection of the financial position on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Housing Capital Investment Programme to the end of the financial year that sought the view of the Committee prior to consideration by Council on 16 December 2015.

The Deputy Borough Treasurer attended the meeting, provided a summary of progress, responded to questions and provided clarification referencing details as set down in the report.

RESOLVED: That progress against the HRA and the Capital Investment Programme budgets be noted.

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Chairman