

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23 JANUARY 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 23 January 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Chairman)

Councillors: David Cox, Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, George Hardcastle, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance; Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development; and Adele Davies-Cooke

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Patrick Heesom attended as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing; Chief Officer (Housing and Assets); Accountant; Capital Works Team Manager; and Senior Sheltered Housing Officer

IN ATTENDANCE: Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest on Agenda Item 4 'Housing Revenue Account Budget 2019/20' as he was a Council tenant.

50. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2018 were submitted.

Minute number 37: Communities for Work - Councillor Palmer asked that his comments be included about the need to agree the right terms of reference before appointing a Town Centre Manager/Regeneration Officer to ensure that they were not vilified for not doing the job within the current climate.

Minute number 38: Regional Homeless Strategy and Local Action Plan - Councillor Palmer asked that his comments be included about provision being made available following a relationship breakdown.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendments, the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET 2019/20, HRA BUSINESS PLAN NARRATIVE & SUMMARY HRA 30 YEAR FINANCIAL BUSINESS PLAN

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) introduced a report to consider the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2019/20, HRA Business Plan narrative and the summary HRA 30 year Financial Business Plan.

The Committee received a presentation which covered the following:

- HRA achievements 2018/19
- Council house building programme
- 30 year business plan
- 2019/20 budget
 - Income
 - Service charges 2019/20
 - HRA efficiency proposals and use of one-off funding
 - Proposed HRA investment decisions and cost pressures
- HRA Capital Programme 2019/20
- HRA future activity

Amongst a number of key achievements were the Council's performance on the gas servicing standard and apprenticeships supported through the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP). Delivery of the latter would be further enhanced by the Council's success in attracting Welsh Government (WG) grant funding towards a scheme of affordable apartments in Garden City.

The Accountant detailed key assumptions for 2019/20 including proposed increases of £1 per week for garage rent and £0.20 per week for garage plots. No changes were proposed for service charges whilst public consultation was being undertaken. Explanation was given on changes to HRA funding since the previous year and proposed HRA investment decisions and cost pressures leading to a projected contribution of £0.158m to reserves.

The Capital Works Team Manager provided information on the types of work within HRA Capital Programme where focus on the WHQS was shifting to envelope and environmental works.

The Chairman commended the HRA achievements which had been well received by tenants.

This was echoed by Councillor Shotton who asked that Members be provided with an update on the WHQS. The Chief Officer agreed that the area based programme would be shared once it had been updated. On the request for Members to meet with Housing officers, Councillor Attridge suggested that arrangements be made for a drop-in session after the review had concluded.

In response to questions from Councillor Dolphin, the Chief Officer provided details on the review of garages. He agreed to circulate a response on the number of

Apprentices appointed to full-time positions and investigate reports of a parked Council van in Carmel.

In response to questions from Councillors Dolphin and Hardcastle, the Capital Works Team Manager outlined the various classifications for 'acceptable fails' in the WHQS, advising that checks were undertaken to assess the condition of those properties. The practice of pre-assessment checks helped to identify any medical conditions of the tenant so that works could be co-ordinated in the most appropriate way.

In response to a query from Councillor Reece, it was confirmed that solid brick properties were included in the programme of envelope works.

Councillor Davies commended the work undertaken at Melrose Court. When asked about the outcome of the garage review, Councillor Attridge asked officers to share the programme of works with Members.

On the WHQS, Councillor Palmer asked how many properties had met the Standard and how many were left to complete before 2020. The Team Manager advised that all component upgrades had been completed in around 1,200 properties with the remainder due to be completed by the deadline. He agreed to share the figures which were submitted to WG on an annual basis.

In welcoming the work on garage sites, Councillor Hughes said that this had unfortunately resulted in parking problems in some areas. When asked about the installation of dropped kerbs outside properties, Councillor Attridge advised that private residents were able to arrange for their own contractor subject to meeting the specification available via Streetscene Supervisors.

On the SHARP programme, Councillor Attridge advised that other potential sites were being explored for development, including Buckley. The Chief Officer encouraged Members to come forward with any suggestions for suitable sites.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget and business plan for 2019/20, as set out in the report;
- (b) That the Committee supports the proposed rent increase of up to 2.4% (plus up to £2);
- (c) That the Committee supports a garage rent increase of £1 per week and a garage plot rent increase of £0.20 per week; and
- (d) That the Committee supports the proposed HRA Capital Programme for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix C of the report.

52. SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) presented a report on the proposed review of sheltered accommodation within the context of an increasing demand for social housing across Flintshire; an increasing number of people with physical disabilities; and the strategic principle in the draft Housing Strategy of making the best use of existing stock.

The Chief Officer summarised the various data underpinning the review including reasons for non-occupation, the establishment of effective transport links and exploring new technology to support residents to live in their accommodation for as long as practicable. Views were sought on the proposal to align the Council's age criteria to that of the Housing Association partners of Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH), ie over 55 years old.

Whilst understanding the reason for changing the age range, Councillor Palmer expressed concerns that this should not be at the expense of those aged 50-55. The Chief Officer suggested that a fair approach would be to review applicants in that age range currently registered on SARTH to avoid them being disadvantaged, before agreeing a cut-off point.

In noting that this was a difficult decision, Councillor Shotton spoke in support of the proposed change. Councillor Attridge said that the SARTH process had improved greatly since its introduction and he gave assurance that older people in most need would be accommodated.

Councillor Dolphin referred to blocks of apartments developed by Wales & West Housing which could be suitable for individuals aged over 50 living alone.

Following a question by Councillor Hardcastle, the Senior Sheltered Housing Officer provided explanation on the recycling of mobility equipment where an adapted property could not be matched to applicants on the specialist housing register.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports amending the eligibility for all mini-groups and sheltered schemes to age 55 with the intention that they are all brought in line with the Housing Associations and Local Authority SARTH partners, subject to the review of current applicants between the age of 50 to 55; and
- (b) That the Committee supports the scope of an officer review as outlined within the report.

53. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration and the following changes were agreed:

- The specialist housing report to be brought forward from March to the special meeting on 18 February.

- An update on rent arrears to be included for February, with a quarterly update scheduled thereafter.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

54. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 11.05am)

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Chairman