

**Minutes of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee
29 March 2022**

Present:

Councillor S.A. Dunn (Chairman)
Councillor S.M. Doran (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

C.L. Barratt	N.J. Gething	J. Vinson
R.O. Barratt	M. Gibson	
C. Bateson	O. Rybinski	

Apologies: Councillors J.R. Boughtflower

In Attendance: Councillors R.D. Dunn, M. Beecher and L. E. Nichols

12/22 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 01 February were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

13/22 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

14/22 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

15/22 Ward Issues

There were none.

16/22 Capital Monitoring Report Q3 (Oct-Dec 2021)

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Accountant that outlined the capital projects that fell under the remit of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee.

Concerns were expressed over the figures for the Oast House and in particular the large overspend in the sum of £13.4m. The Deputy Chief Executive, Terry Collier advised that this was due to both the delays moving the development forward and also the increase in construction costs.

Terry agreed to circulate a more detailed breakdown of the overspend to Committee Members and the Committee Manager would include the response in the minutes of the meeting.

The Committee asked why the report was showing an increase in costs for the acquisition of land at the White House.

Terry advised that The Chief Finance Officer would provide a detailed answer to all Committee members and that the Committee Manager would include the response in the minutes of the meeting.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report.

17/22 Revenue Monitoring Report Q3 (Oct-Dec 2021)

The Committee considered a report from the Deputy Chief Accountant, Anna Russell that sought to outline the draft forecast outturn for 2021/22 as at 31 December 2021 and the aggregate variances by cost centre.

The report was presented by the Deputy Chief Executive, Terry Collier.

Concerns were raised by the Committee about how the cost of living rise may impact on the residents of the Borough. Terry advised the Committee that the longer term economic impacts of the pandemic were not yet fully felt and that this is merging with broader cost of living pressures but that this would be monitored closely. It was likely that the figures for Q1 2022/23 would reflect the impact of the cost of living increases and movements in the number of residents in receipt of Housing Benefit.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report.

18/22 Community Wellbeing & Housing Strategy

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Lead Independent Living, Stephen Mortimer-Cleavelly and the Active Lifestyle and Wellbeing Manager, Mary Holdaway that sought approval for adoption of the Spelthorne Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027.

The Committee were advised that this strategy focussed on three principles, People, Place and Community and that these would link in with the recently adopted Corporate Plan priorities. Funding streams would be sought to support the new objectives and Stephen advised the Committee that he had

recently secured funding in the sum of £475k to help fulfil some of the goals around health and prevention.

Some areas within the Borough have high levels and deprivation and the focus will be on these areas for the first two years with the remaining areas being looked at in years 3-5.

Proposed by Councillor Doran
Seconded by Councillor Vinson

The Committee **resolved** to adopt the Spelthorne Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027.

The Chair suggested that Item 16 – Urgent Business, be brought forward as it was also to be presented by Stephen Mortimer-Cleevely. Item 16 was an exempt item and would need to be heard in a closed session.

The Committee **agreed** to consider Item 16 at this stage of the meeting.

19/22 Exclusion of Public & Press

It was proposed by Councillor Gething, seconded by Councillor Bateson, and **resolved** that the public and press be excluded during consideration of the following item, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) because it was likely to disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because, disclosure to the public would prejudice the financial position of the authority in being able to undertake even-handed negotiations and finalising acceptable contract terms.

20/22 Procurement of Property Acquisition Service and Funding Bid for Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP)

After the Committee had considered Item 16 in a private session, Items 9-15 were heard in a public session.

This report was presented by the Strategic Lead Housing, Marta Imig that sought to:

1. Approve the proposed procurement of a Property Acquisition Service for the duration of 5 years,

2. Approve the proposed bid for Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) for acquisition of six units and the associated revenue support,
3. Delegate the appointment of the contractor to the Group Head of Community Wellbeing in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee; and
4. Authorise the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter into any legal documentation necessary to implement the new contract.

Marta advised the Committee that they had previously approved the Acquisition of Registered Providers Street Properties Policy in September 2021 but that the Council does not have the resources to administer the acquisition. Therefore there was a need for a Property Acquisition Service to be put in place.

Marta stated that the properties the Council were looking to purchase under the Property Acquisition Scheme would comprise mainly or larger properties for families and also properties that had been or could be adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person.

The Committee were advised that the deadline for a bid for RSAP was 13 April 2022 and that each Council could bid for 6-8 properties that would provide short term accommodation for a homeless person during which they would receive support from the Council. They would then be moved into permanent accommodation provided by the Council.

Marta suggested that the Committee approve Option 3 of the report that was to not approve the bid for RSAP funding, but to approve the tender in respect of the acquisition of street properties on only.

Proposed by Councillor Bateson
Seconded by Councillor Vinson

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. approve the proposed procurement of a Property Acquisition Service for the duration of 5 years,
2. delegate the appointment of the Contractor to the Group Head of Community Wellbeing in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee; and
3. authorise the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter into any legal documentation necessary to implement the new contract.

21/22 Homes England Compliance Audit

The Housing Strategy & Policy Manager, Marta Imig presented this report to the Committee.

Marta advised the Committee that the Council had passed the audit with no recommendations. She advised that Homes England required the outcome of

the Compliance Audit to be brought to the attention of the relevant Committee within 3 months of the audit result release.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report.

22/22 Tenancy Strategy

The Housing Strategy & Policy Manager, Marta Imig presented this report to the Committee that sought approval of the revised Tenancy Strategy following a review of the Council's current Tenancy Strategy.

This report had been brought before this Committee on a previous occasion but was rejected by Members due to the proposal for a reduction of the affordable rent, from 80% to 70%. The redrafted version of the Tenancy Strategy proposes to retain the affordable rent levels at the lower of up to 80% of market rent value or Local Housing Allowance, this is unchanged from the current approved Strategy.

The Committee asked for clarification of the difference between the market rent and the Local Housing Authority (LHA) rent. The Joint Group Head, Wellbeing & Housing, Deborah Ashman advised the Committee that tenants would be charged 80% of market rent or 100% of the LHA rate, whichever proves to be the lowest. She clarified that this would only be for the affordable units.

Concerns were raised about developments in prime locations within the borough and it was suggested that all levels of renting should be considered, affordable and non-affordable to achieve the best financial outcome for the Council and Knowle Green Estates.

The Deputy Chief Executive, Terry Collier agreed that all types of tenure should be considered for new developments across the borough but that there was a need to ensure that all people on the Housing Waiting List were considered.

Proposed by Councillor Bateson
Seconded by Councillor Gibson

The Committee **resolved** to approve the Tenancy Strategy.

23/22 Procurement of Housing First Provider

This report was presented by the Housing Strategy & Policy Manager, Marta Imig and sought approval to:

1. the proposed procurement of a Housing First service for the duration of 3 years, with 3 x 1 year extensions in the Council's sole discretion subject to government funding availability and the performance of the contract,

2. delegate the appointment of the Contractor to the Group Head of Housing in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee; and
3. authorise the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter into any legal documentation necessary to implement the new contract.

Marta advised the Committee that the current contract for the provision of a Housing First service was with A2 Dominion and that this contract ended on 31 May 2022. The Strategic Housing Group had recommended going out to procurement of this contract and to select a provider through a competitive tender process.

The Chair advised the Committee that she and officers would be meeting with A2 Dominion regularly to address any issues. The Committee were told that officers would be reissuing A2 Dominion's contact details to Councillors to enable them to contact them direct.

Proposed by Councillor Vinson
Seconded by Councillor Doran

The Committee **resolved** to:

4. approve the proposed procurement of a Housing First service for the duration of 3 years, with 3 x 1 year extensions in the Council's sole discretion subject to government funding availability and the performance of the contract,
5. delegate the appointment of the Contractor to the Group Head of Housing in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee; and
6. authorise the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter into any legal documentation necessary to implement the new contract.

24/22 Key Worker Policy Review

This report was presented by the Housing Strategy & Policy Manager, Marta Imig and sought approval of the revised Key Worker Policy.

Marta advised the Committee that this was a revised version of the current Key Worker Policy that sought to wider the definition of who would be considered a Key Worker.

The Committee asked why it was felt necessary to widen the definition of Key Worker. Marta stated that there was currently only a small number of applicants on the Housing Waiting List that would meet the criteria needed to be considered a Key Worker and that the Council had experienced difficulties letting units at Benwell that had been ringfenced for Key Workers.

The Joint Group Head Community Wellbeing, Deborah Ashman advised the Committee that if the definition of a Key Worker was broaden the Council

would be able to support more residents within the Borough and would minimise the risk of voids in keyworker units.

Proposed by Councillor Doran
Seconded by Councillor Vinson

The Committee **resolved** to approve the revised Key Worker Policy.

25/22 Housing Disrepair Issues

The Chair read out the following statement from the Senior Environmental Health Manager, Tracey Willmott-French:

“The A2D update regarding the commencement of the quarterly meetings to discuss programmed and reactive housing repairs resume on the 07 April 2022. In addition to myself and Susan Turp both Councillor Sexton and Councillor S Dunn will be attending the first meeting.

There is nothing more to add at this time, however going forward we will be able to provide some basic statistics around housing disrepair complaints and repair issued on RSL homes within the Borough.”

The Committee **resolved** to note the verbal update.

26/22 Forward Plan

The Committee **resolved** to note the Forward Plan for the business of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee.

27/22 Urgent business

The Committee received a verbal update from The Strategic Lead Independent Living, Mr Stephen Mortimer-Cleavelly on the Spelthorne Personal Alarm Network (SPAN).