

**Minutes of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee
28 September 2021**

Present:

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

Councillors:

C. Bateson	O. Rybinski	J. Vinson
M.J. Madams	V. Siva	

Apologies: Councillors M.M. Attewell and N. Islam

In Attendance: Councillors M. Beecher and L. E. Nichols

390/21 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Attewell and Islam.

391/21 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

392/21 Minutes - 29 June 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

393/21 Afghan Resettlement Scheme

The Committee received a report from the Family Support Manager that outlined the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) which relates to families members of whom had been working directly to support UK forces in Afghanistan and that sought the Committee's approval for the Council to participate in the Policy to provide support for up to five families and to being open to support in general future refugee schemes in Spelthorne as requested by Central Government.

The Committee were advised that currently the Family Support Team had been supporting a number of families who are being accommodated in temporary accommodations in the Borough before being moved on by the Home Office to more permanent accommodation around the country.

The families under the ARAP scheme would be housed in private rental properties and would be fully funded by Central Government and as such, there would be no adverse effect on the current residents of Spelthorne on the Housing Register.

The Family Support Manager advised the Committee that a full-term post would be needed to support the 5 families and that the cost of this would be funded by money provided by Central Government as part of the ARAP. As most of the families have a member that can speak fluent English, recruitment for this post should not be challenging.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. approve the participation in Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) in Spelthorne to provide support for up to five families; and
2. to support a policy approach of being open to support in general future refugee schemes in Spelthorne as requested by Central Government, on which detailed reports will be provided.

394/21 Capital Monitoring Report (Qtr. 1 April - June)

The Committee received a Capital Monitoring report related to services falling under the remit of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee for quarter one of the financial year from the Deputy Chief Executive. The Committee were advised that for the quarter year that ended 30 June 2021 there was a projected aggregate net underspend of £290k.

Concerns were raised in respect of the overspend of £356k on the Whitehouse Single Person Homeless Hostel development. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that this figure was due problems caused by the pandemic in respect of labour, sourcing of materials and deadlines not being met. Additional enhanced specification in respect of fitting out the hostel, including disability adaptations, had also added to the costs of this development. However, £308k of this overspend had been offset by external grant funds. The Committee were advised by the Deputy Chief Executive that he would provide a written statement of the costs involved in respect the Whitehouse Hostel and also the land value split between the Whitehouse Hostel and Whitehouse Residential developments.

The Committee made reference to a previous development, Churchill House that had gone over budget. The Council had sought to learn from that past experience to ensure that future developments stayed on budget and were neither subject to an underspend or a overspend and this in part is why the

additional governance associated with the Development Sub-Committee had been put in place. It was agreed that the Council must put in place good practice to ensure that any budget allocated to a development is managed effectively. The Deputy Chief Executive advised the Committee that Term Sheets were being used for all new developments and that the Development Sub-Committee would be monitoring each development to ensure that the costs incurred were inline with the original budgets.

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

395/21 Revenue Monitoring Report (Qtr. 1 April - June)

The Committee received a Revenue Monitoring report related to Community Wellbeing and Housing services falling under the remit of the Committee for quarter one of the financial year from the Deputy Chief Executive. The Committee were advised that for the quarter year that ended 30 June 2021 there was a projected aggregate underspend of £271k.

A significant number of the overspends and underspends in the report were related to COVID-19

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

396/21 Tenancy Strategy

The Joint Group Head Community Wellbeing presented a report to the Committee that sought approval for the revised Tenancy Strategy. The original Tenancy Strategy was introduced in 2012 and had not been reviewed since.

The Committee were advised that the affordable rents were currently 80% of the market rent. Because of the high rents within the Borough these reduced rents were still not affordable for a lot of potential residents on low income. A number of tenants had been relying on Discretionary Hardship Payments initially to afford their rent which is not a sustainable funding basis and adds pressure to the Council's revenue budget. The revised Tenancy Strategy sought, following a consultation with Registered Providers and Knowle Green Estates to deliver an affordable rental of 70% for new tenancies for re-lets as well as new builds where planning permission had already been granted.

Concerns were raised about the financial implications for the Council's wholly owned housing delivery company Knowle Green Estates and its ability to repay loan financing to the Council if the affordable rent was reduced to 70%. No other Local Authorities in Surrey currently used the 70% model although a few are considering moving to 70%. It was raised that because it was a change of policy it should go before more Committees for their feedback before going onto Council. The Deputy Chief Executive stated that this issue

fell within the remit of this Committee but that it would go before the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee asked that Directors from Knowle Green Estates be asked to attend the next meeting of the Committee.

It was suggested that this issue needed to be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee in order for the views of Knowle Green Estates and the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to be sought. However other Committee members were happy to make a decision at the meeting.

The Chair, Councillor Dunn proposed that Recommendation 2 of the report be approved and by way of a show of hands the Committee agreed as follows:

For - 5

Against - 1

The Committee **resolved** to approve the Tenancy Strategy and recommend to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that the Tenancy Strategy is approved.

397/21 Acquisition of Registered Providers' Street Properties

The Joint Head Community Wellbeing presented a report to the Committee that sought to enable Knowle Green Estates Ltd to acquire the specific type of properties to suit local housing needs, and to set up disposal protocols for Registered Providers with stock in Spelthorne to ensure that affordable housing remains within the borough.

The Committee **resolved** to recommend to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that:

1. the Acquisition of Registered Providers Street Properties Policy is approved; and
2. to make Capital Programme recommendations for 2022-23 before approval by Council in February 2022.

The Chair asked that the Committee's appreciation for the work that had been undertaken by Community Wellbeing officers throughout the pandemic be noted.

398/21 COVID-19 Recovery Plan Update

The Joint Group Head, Community Wellbeing provided the Committee with details of how the services are recovering post COVID-19.

Community centres have reported that a large number of people have returned to the centres, particularly the OPAL Group that provides for elderly residents with high needs in the Borough. Benwell Centre, Sunbury has not reopened due to concerns from local residents about attending the centre.

Evening meals on wheels service that was introduced during the pandemic has continued.

The first tenants are moving into the Whitehouse Residential development on 06 October 2021.

The amount of rough sleepers in the Borough have reduced from 12 down to 2.

399/21 Forward Plan

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee.

The Committee asked for the following items to be put on the Forward Plan to consider at the meeting of the Committee on 23 November:

1. Knowle Green Estates Annual Report and discussion.
2. Oast House – Bid for Cultural Grant Update

The Committee **resolved** to note the Forward Plan.

400/21 Contract for Cleaning of White House and Harper House

The Committee received a report from the Joint Head Community Wellbeing that sought approval of a cleaning contract for White House and Harper House. A tender process had been carried out in accordance with the requirements of Contract Standing Orders.

The Committee **resolved** to approve the recommended contract for cleaning of White House and Harper House, for the duration of 3 years with an option to extend for a further two 12-month periods.

401/21 Exclusion of Press and Public

It was proposed by Councillor Dunn and Seconded by Councillor Doran and **resolved** to move the exclusion of the Press and Public for the remaining items on the agenda in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

402/21 Search Moves Partnership Review

To Committee **resolved to** approve Recommendation 3.