

Minutes

Environment and Housing Management Committee Wednesday, 7th December, 2016

Attendance

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|-------------------------|------------------|
| Cllr Hossack (Chair) | Cllr Mrs Davies |
| Cllr Poppy (Vice-Chair) | Cllr Mrs Fulcher |
| Cllr Cloke | Cllr Russell |
| Cllr Mrs Coe | |

Substitute Present

Cllr Mrs Hubbard (substituting for Cllr Mrs Squirrel)
Cllr Ms Sanders (substituting for Cllr Tumbridge)

Also Present

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Linda Skinner | Tenant Talkback Co-Optee |
|---------------|--------------------------|

Officers Present

| | | |
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| David Carter | - | Environmental Health Manager |
| Steve Chapman | - | Team Leader of Property Services |
| Mike Dun | - | Trade Waste Officer |
| Zoey Foakes | - | Governance & Member Support Officer |
| Jonathan Gregory | - | Housing Manager |
| Stuart Morris | - | Housing Options Team Leader |
| Ramesh Prashar | - | Financial Services Manager |
| Dawn Taylor | - | Business Support Services Manager |
| Angela Williams | - | Interim Head of Housing |

214. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs Squirrel with Councillor Mrs Hubbard substituting and Cllr Tumbridge with Cllr Ms Sanders substituting.

215. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Environment and Housing Management Committee on 14th September 2016 were approved and signed as a true record.

216. Verbal Update

Updates were received from Officers on:

Stock Condition Survey

A survey of 2,479 properties and communal areas commenced in August 2016. As of 7/12/16, 2174 were complete. A list of non-access addresses had been received from Penningtons. The non-access properties would have an impact on the delivery date but would not prevent collected data being analysed. The inspections were delayed due to the access issues which was being addressed and the final report due in January 2017 was still on track and data was being assessed. The results of the survey would form part of the Council HRA business plan over the coming years.

Drake House

The renewal of the heating and hot water systems was progressing to schedule. All infrastructure pipework had been installed to all levels.

The temporary boiler and booster water plant was now operational and the existing systems had been disconnected and were in the process of being removed.

Individual flat installations were now underway. These were being installed on a top down basis. The work was on schedule and expected to be complete by 23/12/16.

Three Arch Bridge Estate

The 8 blocks that had been left unfinished by the previous contractor had now been completed.

Work was underway to the remaining 7 blocks and some of these were nearing completion ready for handover.

The work remained on course to be complete by 23/12/16.

Gibraltar House

The parking consultation was due to end in January 2017. A further update would be provided to ward members in January 2017 once the consultation ended.

Housing Development Project Update

The Housing Department had been working towards the development of affordable housing on two of the dis-used garage sites at Fawters Close and Magdalen Gardens. This would consist of 4 single storey one bedroom properties for residents over 65, and 3 three bedroom family homes.

The contract was awarded to Borrás Limited and the site had been cleared with the development due to finish at the end of July 2017.

Waste Strategy Group update

The Waste Strategy Group (WSG) last met on 4/10/16 with another meeting that would take place in January 2017.

The group in the past had concentrated primarily on the waste side of the business and had discussed items such as West Horndon Pilot Scheme, Recycling Centre's etc which then came to the Committee for decision making. The next few meetings would now look more at the Street Care side of the Operational Services.

The bring site in Warley had been enhanced and had been opened. The sites at the Town Hall and Rayleigh Road would be open until after Christmas and would close after that period.

Christmas Recycling Roadshows

Officers had attended a number of "Recycling Roadshows" advising and assisting residents with what can be recycled or reused after the Christmas festivities, helpful tips, information about hiring garden waste bins, and stocking up on free recycling sacks and food waste bags.

There were 5 events planned in total, with one of them due to take place on 13/12/16 at the Brentwood Centre and another on 16/12/16 in Brentwood High Street.

217. Performance Presentations

A presentation was given by David Carter on fly tipping cases from September to November 2016, information on the fly tipping cases, and year on year comparisons on the amount of income from prosecution and Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN). Total income was up by 600% from 2014/15 to 2015/16.

Cllr Hossack requested for figures year on year since when the change in policy was enacted at the civic amenity sites for the amount and types of waste.

Mike Dun presented on recycling performance including household tonnage data from April to September 2016 and textile kerbside collection.

A presentation on Key Performance Indicators was given to the Committee by Jonathan Gregory.

Overall, the results were pleasing and the quarterly targets were met or very close to the target.

Cllr Hossack requested that in regards to the "level of arrears at the end of the quarter" figure, more detail be provided specifically to how long the arrear had been for which could help to act sooner.

These presentations were noted by the Committee.

218. Fees and Charges - Street Scene and Housing

Fees and charges made by the Council for various services were reviewed on an annual basis by the relevant Committees relating to the Services.

Recommended amendments to fees and charges were incorporated into the budget setting process to take effect from the following financial year.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Hossack and **SECONDED** by Cllr Poppy to approve the recommendations in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

The proposed fees and charges attached in Appendix A and B of the report were agreed and incorporated within the 2017/18 budget.

Reasons for recommendation

The recommendation was to increase charges by 2.5% (rounded to nearest pound) plus the exceptions detailed within the report, which would have made a small contribution to the subsidised services provided by the Council and aiming to recover the cost of the services being provided.

The recommendation was to introduce additional fees and charges in relation to Leasehold property services as detailed in Appendix B of the report.

219. Housing Strategy 2017-2020

The existing policy document "Housing Strategy 2013-16" was due to expire at the end of 2016. To forward the aims of the Service and Council a new document was required to outline in strategic terms proposed service provision.

The new "Housing Strategy 2017-2020" included revised versions of both the "Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-2020" and "Tenancy Strategy 2013". Upon ratification on the final version of the Housing Strategy, those documents would be formally superseded.

The draft version of the "Housing strategy 2017-2020" outlined a transparent and ambitious approach to the provision of housing services.

The core elements of the new Housing Strategy recognised current housing needs and requirements, reflected against current and future challenges and demands.

Subject to Committee approval, the draft Housing Strategy was put to an online public consultation for residents and partner agencies. The consultation would allow for a final version of the Housing Strategy to be completed for ratification at the next Committee in 2017.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Hossack and **SECONDED** by Cllr Poppy to approve the recommendations in the report with an additional recommendation:

2.4 That a suitable multi channel awareness campaign put into place to promote awareness of the consultation to encourage responses to it.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED** that Members:

- 1. Formally approved the draft Housing Strategy 2017-2020.**
- 2. Formally approved the merger of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy; Tenancy Strategy and Housing Strategy.**
- 3. Formally approved the use of a public online consultation concerning the draft Housing Strategy 2017-2020.**
- 4. That a suitable multi channel awareness campaign put into place to promote awareness of the consultation to encourage responses to it.**

Reasons for recommendations

The proposed Housing Strategy would allow the Council to:

- Meet its legal requirements.
- Target housing solutions within the Borough.
- Broaden the housing range for residents.
- Highlight to tenants and residents the forthcoming challenges which both the Council and they themselves would face.
- Support the implementation of the Welfare Reform agenda (which Brentwood Borough Council was committed to, particularly within existing written policy).
- Structure the Council's approach to housing, in particular as relevant to the Local Development Plan.

220. Empty Homes

The Council did not have a current Empty Homes policy or inter-service working practice in relation to privately-owned vacant properties within the Borough.

Legislation allowed for the Council to take a number of approaches in relation to enabling those vacant properties back into usage on the housing market. Historically Local Authorities rarely made full use of these powers, due to cost and legal complexity.

Vacant properties in the Borough deprived the community of suitable accommodation and were having a detrimental impact on the areas in which were situated.

It was proposed that given the current housing crisis and as a reflection of the Council's determination to consider the viability and desirability of all prevention tools that an internal scoping exercise was held.

Cllr Cloke **MOVED** and Cllr Hossack **SECONDED** an **AMENDMENT** to recommendation 2.1 as follows:

That Officers are instructed to report to the Committee outlining the powers , measures and there associated costs that can be taken to effectively reduce the number of empty homes in the Borough.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

Officers were instructed to report to the Committee outlining the powers, measures and there associated costs that could be taken to effectively reduce the number of empty homes in the Borough.

Reason for recommendation

To further structure the Council's approach to housing, in particular as relevant to the Housing Strategy and Local Plan.

221. Removal of Trees at Oldfields and Victoria Court

Three mature trees were removed from the green area between Victoria Court and Oldfields. These trees were removed due to their root system damaging the tarmac footpaths that ran between the two properties and therefore presenting a health and safety hazard.

As a result, some residents had expressed their disappointment that these trees had been removed.

Although no further trees were to be removed, the proposal was that two small trees were planted in the green area.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Hossack and **SECONDED** by Cllr Russell to approve the recommendation in the report with additional recommendations:

That the path be inspected and reinstated to good condition.

That there be a revised communications process for removal of trees for the future.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that Members:

- 1. Approve the planting of two small trees.**
- 2. That the path be inspected and reinstated to good condition.**

3. That there be a revised communications process for removal of trees for the future.

Reason for recommendation

The planting of two small trees would reduce the effects of removing the large mature trees that were previously in situ, and by choosing small slow growing trees would require minimal maintenance.

222. Rent Setting 2017/18

The report sought the recommendations of the Environment and Housing Management Committee on the proposed rent levels for 2017/18.

The recommendations would be considered by the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee when the final recommendation would be made as part of the budget setting process. The final decision would be made by Ordinary Council on the 1st March 2017.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Hossack and **SECONDED** by Cllr Poppy to approve the recommendation in the report with the removal of recommendation 2.5.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that Members agreed:

1. To decrease rent by 1% from April 2017 and for the next two years.
2. That Shared Ownership rent be increased by CPI + 1%.
3. To freeze the proposed Services Charges at 2016/17 levels as outlined within the report, which would then be incorporated within the 2017/18 Budget, and that a further report be presented to this Committee providing details of the outcome of the review of the current charging policies, which would then inform the 2017/18 changing levels.
4. To apply the formula rent to all new tenancies from April 2017/18.
5. ~~To note the possibility of changing market rents to households with more than £30,000 annual income.~~

Reason for recommendations

The recommendation was to follow the guideline 1% decrease for 2016/17 and the following two years as this was what had been set by Government.

The following assumptions had been taken into consideration for the Rent Setting for 2017:

- The financial viability of the HRA business plan.

- Provision for a repairs capital programme of £36m for 2017/18 pending the results of the stock condition survey.
- Development fund for new homes £500K.
- No allowance had been made for growth bids.
- Affordability for tenants.

223. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting concluded at 20:50.