

# Minutes

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## Community, Health and Housing Committee Tuesday, 3rd July, 2018

### Attendance

Cllr Hossack (Chair)	Cllr Mrs Fulcher
Cllr Poppy (Vice-Chair)	Cllr McLaren
Cllr Bridge	Cllr Ms Sanders
Cllr Clarke	Cllr Tierney
Cllr Mrs Davies	

### Also Present

Linda Skinner	Tenant Talkback
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### Officers Present

Kim Anderson	-	Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager
David Carter	-	Environmental Health Manager
Stuart Morris	-	Interim Housing Policy Manager
Zoey Foakes	-	Governance & Member Support Officer
Tracey Lilley	-	Enforcement Manager
Nicola Marsh	-	Housing Manager
Lorne Spicer	-	Business Development and PR Manager
Steve Summers	-	Chief Operating Officer

### 55. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies received.

### 56. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2018 were approved as a true record subject to a spelling error on page 8 which read as “resent” instead of “present”.

### 57. Verbal Update

Mrs Marsh, Housing Manager presented on Key Performance indicators for the Housing Department.

This was an overview for the end Quarter 4.

### **Rent Collection**

In November 2017 Brentwood was moved over to Full Service Universal Credit ('UC'). Tenants receiving this are responsible for making direct payments, which increases the level of risk to the Council as the landlord. There has been an increase in the level of arrears due to the roll-out of Full Service Universal Credit.

During this quarter resource issues were experienced which impacted on rent collection. The management team had focussed on ensuring this issue was not replicated in the next quarter. Tenancy management issues were not impacted on during the above period. Additional payment methods had been introduced to enable tenants to make payments more easily in an effort to empower them, for the purpose of improving rent loss.

### **Re-Let Periods**

There had been an increase in the average re-let time due to the requirement for an asbestos management survey to be carried out whilst a property is void [and asbestos removal where necessary]. Compliancy must be the primary focus, which had led to an average 3 day addition to the void period. To mitigate against any unforeseen delays, we had introduced a priority system by having weekly void meetings to focus on those properties that could be more immediately ready to let.

Whilst overall, there had seen an decrease in the average re-let time due to the requirement for an asbestos management survey to be carried out whilst a property is void the overall average re-let time for general needs housing had reduced slightly. Whilst this had reduced we will strive to continue to reduce the overall turnaround time for general needs properties.

Whilst there had been an increase in the average re-let time for sheltered accommodation, partially due to the requirement for an asbestos management survey to be carried out whilst a property is void we had also continued to have difficulty re-letting sheltered accommodation, which may be due to several factors, which include, the overall public perception of sheltered housing and the overall condition of the properties.

### **Temporary Accommodation**

The amount of households housed in temporary accommodation had remained relatively static across the year, with focus being given to prevention work to avoid homelessness.

### **Gas servicing**

We had increased the servicing level for Gas servicing following a review to streamline the process. We expected to see the servicing regime return to 100% by the end of quarter 1.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Wates – Customer satisfaction levels had increased slightly in Q4. We were continuing to work closely with the contractor to improve customer satisfaction level further.

Oakray – Customer satisfaction levels had maintained in Q4. We were continuing to work closely with the contractor to improve customer satisfaction.

Mr Carter presented on Empty Homes to the Committee.

The Empty Homes Strategy would look at properties that been empty for 2 years or more.

Looking at empty homes in comparison to the rest of Essex, Brentwood were 6<sup>th</sup>.

There were 6 properties that were empty and no activity was taking place on these properties. The Chair suggested that these 6 properties were investigated and an update on this be brought back to committee.

The Chair also discussed that the resources for investigating Empty Homes were low throughout Essex and that a letter should be sent to the Chair of EHO to create a task force throughout Essex and pool funds and resources to tackle this.

## **58. Co-option of Tenants Representatives**

The report set out proposals to co-opt representatives of Tenants Talkback into the Community, Health and Housing Committee for housing related items, in accordance with the Council constitution.

These representatives were agreed as Chris Price and Linda Skinner.

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:

**Tenant Talkback be invited to send two representatives to each meeting of the Community, Health and Housing Committee where housing items are to be discussed.**

**The representatives of Tenants Talkback be co-opted onto the committee for the duration of the consideration of these items, and have the right to speak, but not vote.**

**The Housing Manager be requested to arrange appropriate training of the representatives.**

#### **59. Housing Audit Report**

The report was intended to update the Community, Health & Housing Committee of the outcome of the 2016/17 and 2017/18 Audit review for Housing Services as part of the Council's approved Audit plans for 2016/17.

The outcome of the 2016/17 internal audit review was reported to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

The outcome of the 2017/18 internal audit review was reported to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

Both Audit reports would enable the Housing Service to concentrate on specific areas highlighted by both Audit reports to implement the essential service improvements as part of the ongoing transformation programme.

Members requested that future audit reports would include a cover page to show comparisons of what stage the risks (high, medium or low).

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:**

- 1. That the Committee receives and notes the progress made from the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2018 committee report in addressing the contents of both Audit reports.**
- 2. That the Committee agree that a further report on progress made on implementing the recommendations is presented to the next Committee.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

To monitor the progress of work against the highlighted actions recommended arising from the Audit Report and management actions in response to those recommendations.

#### **60. Housing Fire Safety Policy**

The report set out the proposals for a new Fire Safety Policy to be implemented within the Housing Department.

The Policy provided the council with the ability to effectively manage Fire Safety and fire awareness within all its residential blocks.

The Policy also met the Council's statutory requirement to have a Fire Safety Policy.

All tenants would be written to and notices to be displayed once the policy was approved.

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**:

- 1. Committee is asked to approve the Housing Services Fire Safety Policy.**
- 2. Committee is asked to approve the use of Evacuation Notice's for General Needs accommodation and Sheltered Schemes.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

It was a statutory requirement for the Council to have a Fire Safety Policy. Failure to have one would leave the Council in a vulnerable position should a fire occur.

### **61. Housing Garage Sites Report 2018**

Housing Services were reviewing the usage of Council-owned Housing Revenue Account ('HRA') garage sites across the entire estate. The review focused on anti-social behaviour hotspots ('ASB') and garage account arrears.

The report set out the background and recommendation for Committee to direct a formal scoping exercise in relation to the above. A formal exercise would allow for a more focussed, systemic and transparent approach to service provision and revenue protection.

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**:

- 1. That Housing Services undertakes a formal scoping exercise for a full report to be submitted to the next Community, Health and Housing Committee.**
- 2. That the Committee formally notes the statistical headline data relating to garage sites (Appendix A of the report).**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation:**

Option 1 was recommended as the most transparent for the Council and fully supported the existing ASB and income-protection strategies. It would allow

for a more detailed assessment of how garage sites could be utilised to maximise opportunities for asset development, parking and housing across the Borough.

The scoping exercise would feed into current specific site developments, as well as the wider corporate asset work being undertaken as part of the wholly-owned company (Seven Arches Investments Limited) and Joint Venture Partnership.

Taking no further action would fail to advance corporate priorities and would be counter to our modernisation programme.

## **62. Community Safety Partnership Plan 18-19**

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was made up of Responsible Authorities as outlined in the Crime & Disorder Act 1988 which included the Council as a key partner.

Each year the partnership had a statutory duty to carry out a Strategic Intelligence Assessment which reviewed existing priorities and identified any new or emerging priorities that the partnership should focus on.

All partners agreed the Strategic Priorities and set out in their Partnership Plan (see Appendix A of the report) how the partnership would work together over the next twelve months to tackle crime and disorder and achieve its priorities.

The CSPs Strategic Priorities for 2018/19 were:

- Protecting People
- Protecting Property
- Protecting the Community
- Protecting the Future

A set of action plans had been developed which underpinned delivery of the above priorities and set out how the partnership would work together to stimulate activity across the Borough, focusing on those activities that added value as a result of being delivered in partnership.

Ms Lilley praised the work of voluntary Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator Peter Salmon who worked alongside the team.

Cllr Hossack alongside Ms Lilley credited Daniel Cannon for the production of the CSP Plan document.

Members endorsed the work on the Partnership Plan.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Hossack and **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs Davies to approve the recommendation in the report.

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

**Members to endorse and support the work of the CSP through the Partnership Plan.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

The Council was one of the key partners within the CSP and it was vital that this was supported by Members to ensure that it remained effective in tackling local crime and disorder issues that affected our most vulnerable residents.

### **63. Termination of Meeting**

At 9.00pm in accordance with Rule 10.1 of the Council's procedural rules, Members resolved to continue the meeting for a further 30 minutes.

### **64. Leisure Strategy**

The Leisure Strategy was one of the key strategies as set out in the Vision for Brentwood 2016-19 document. The Council had ageing facilities and needed to ensure that its leisure facilities were not only fit for purpose but for the future.

The Strategy and action plan set out the vision, what the Council needed to achieve, the challenges it faced and how the priorities and outcomes had been identified. The Leisure Strategy was a large piece of work, so it had been split into workstreams to enable its delivery. The Strategy would cover a period of 10 years, but the supporting action plan would be a live document which would be reviewed and updated regularly to note the progress on the delivery of the Strategy.

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**:

- 1. That Members agree the Leisure Strategy and action plan at Appendix A (of the report).**
- 2. That Members refer the Leisure Strategy to Policy, Projects and Resources Committee on 18 September 2018 for their consideration.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

As part of the Council's due diligence in delivering a successful Leisure Strategy, Members and officers needed to have a complete picture of the current associated costs, risk profiles of the Borough's Leisure facilities and identify opportunities for income generation.

Comments received from Sport England as part of the Local Development Plan consultation, stated that a Leisure Strategy was required that assessed Council owned sports and leisure facilities in order that the Council could continue to work with partners to ensure that appropriate provision was made for the residents of Brentwood. The strategy should have not only considered how the Council could provide services, but also how other partners could. The strategy should have also used current sports facility evidence to identify strategic priorities to then inform what would be included in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Following the feasibility work, the Council would then be able to determine which projects would be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and those funded by planning obligations.

The Council's Asset Management Strategy 2014/15 also set out the need to obtain maximise income where possible from its asset portfolio.

## **65. Leisure Strategy Working Group**

The purpose of the report was for the Committee to consider appointments to the Leisure Strategy Working Group (LSWG) and an indicative work plan, to enable officers to review the development and delivery of the Council's Leisure Strategy.

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:**

- 1. That any necessary changes to the Membership of the Leisure Strategy Working Group during the Municipal Year 2018/19 are made in accordance with paragraph 4.2 of the report.**
- 2. That Members note the indicative work plan in Appendix A for the review of Leisure Strategy, during the 2018/19 Municipal Year.**
- 3. Agree that the Leisure Strategy Working Group will report to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee with any recommendations.**

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

The Council's need to ensure that options for each of the workstreams were fully examined, reviewed and prioritised and that the Leisure Strategy delivers Value for Money, was sustainable and met the needs of Brentwood residents.

## **66. Play Area Strategy - Working Group**

As Members were aware, Councillors approved the draft Leisure Strategy at the Community, Health and Housing Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

The strategy was an overarching document that drew together all the Council's leisure and recreation opportunities within the Borough and how this



could be supplied and improved to meet current and future demand of residents.

One element of the strategy was to review the provision, supply and condition of play areas within the Borough. This work stream was identified early within the working process of producing the leisure Strategy and had been highlighted in previous update reports.

Whilst the Leisure Strategy took a holistic view of the Boroughs leisure and recreation facilities it did not identify the specific work programmes that were required to address supply, demand and condition within each workstream.

To achieve this, supporting strategies were needed that focused more on the detail of the workstream. To this end it had been identified by Officers that there was a need to produce a Play Area Strategy focusing specifically on the provision, supply and condition of play areas within the Borough.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Hossack **SECONDED** to approve the recommendations in the report subject to the following amendments:

- 1. The current leisure strategy working group aids the development of a new play area strategy to be brought back to the next committee.*
- 3. That Members instruct Officers to undertake an 'audit' of the Council's play sites to determine those areas that require more immediate attention on individual items and to report the findings of this audit back to the next committee.*

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

- 1. The current leisure strategy working group aids the development of a new play area strategy to be brought back to the next committee.**
- 2. That Members agree to and instruct Officers to commence and move forward with the refurbishment of the toddler area at Courage Playing Field, outside of the work stream for the Play Area Strategy. That this be achieved using existing resources within the capital works programme.**
- 3. That Members instruct Officers to undertake an 'audit' of the Council's play sites to determine those areas that require more immediate attention on individual items and to report the findings of this audit back to the next committee.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

To ensure that the Council had a robust strategy in place for the future provision and refurbishment of its play facilities around the Borough.

To ensure that resources, both financial and staffing could be adequately planned for as part of the Council's medium to long term financial plan.

To ensure that the existing play area at Courage Playing Fields was refurbished and remains fit for purpose and use for the residents of Shenfield and the surrounding area.

**67. Request By Shenfield Cricket Club for Additional Fixtures of Courage Playing Fields Park Field**

The Council had been approached by Shenfield Cricket Club with regard to playing additional fixtures on the park field and cricket square at Courage Playing Fields.

The club had been using two fields at the site, the first was the clubs original field on the land and is the field named in the 1950 deed of gift as the "Cricket ground situate upon the property".

The second field was the main park field and permission was granted by the Council via the Leisure, Recreation and Arts Committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1993 for the club to establish a second cricket square on site due to the increase in playing members at the club.

The permission was granted with conditions, two of which were that the facility should be used for cricket on one day of the weekend and the other that the permission be reviewed at a later date [min. 304].

The later condition had never been carried out and the current arrangement had not been reviewed since 1993.

The club had requested to use the park field for additional fixtures for the season that would result in the field being used for more than one day a weekend, therefore the Chair had requested that the item be brought before members for consideration as per the original permission.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Poppy **SECONDED** to approve the recommendations in the report subject to the following amendments:

*2.1 That members agree the request for additional use on the second fields as per Appendix A. that any further action required be delegated to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Chair and Ward Members.*

*2.2 That a report be made to a future committee regarding the process of the future approval of the clubs fixtures.*

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

- 1. That members agree the request for additional use on the second fields as per Appendix A. that any further action required be**

**delegated to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Chair and Ward Members.**

- 2. That a report be made to a future committee regarding the process of the future approval of the clubs fixtures.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

To establish the Council's position with regard to the request for additional cricket fixtures at Courage Playing Fields on the park field.

#### **68. Request for Licence to Occupy by Brentwood Youth AFC - Larkin Playing Field**

Larkins Playing Fields was one of the Council's larger and principle open spaces in the Borough and was located in the Pilgrims Hatch ward along the Ongar Road.

The site had, since 2016, been the home of Brentwood Youth AFC. The club came into being when Brentwood Athletic and Kelvedon Hatch decided to merge. This created a new club within Brentwood with over 400 members.

The site had three football pitches of varying sizes marked out to support the club at, what was, its home ground.

There was also an area of unused ground that could accommodate a further two pitches, however this lay wet during the winter months rendering it unusable in its current condition.

The club resided at the site on an unofficial basis with no secure tenure, their residency was secured each season via the hiring of pitches from the council for the winter sports season. This allocation was not guaranteed each year.

In order to allow the club to create a permanent base at Larkins Playing Field club representatives had approached the Council with regard to securing a licence to occupy the site on a more formal and permanent basis.

The site was designated as public open space and also had a number of restrictive covenants placed on it as part of the deed of gift when the site was given to the Council by the Larkin family.

The designation coupled with the restrictive covenants meant that there could be complications in issuing the club a licence to occupy, therefore it was felt that legal advice should be sought prior to responding to the club.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Poppy **SECONDED** the recommendations subject to an amendment to 2.2 :

*2.2 That the findings of this investigation be reported back to the next committee along with associated recommendations*

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

- 1. That members instruct Officers to investigate the legal implications and restrictions that may be present in the issuing of a licence to occupy to Brentwood Youth AFC for Larkins Playing Fields.**
- 2. That the findings of this investigation be reported back to the next committee along with associated recommendations.**

**Reasons for Recommendation**

To allow Officers to establish the legal position of issuing a licence to occupy for Brentwood Youth AFC at Larkin Playing Fields.

**69. Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business and the meeting ended at 9:05pm.