

# Minutes

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## Community, Health and Housing Committee Tuesday, 11th September, 2018

### Attendance

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

### Apologies

Cllr Tierney

### Substitute Present

Cllr Wiles

### Also Present

Cllr Naylor  
James Henderson – Basildon Borough Council

### Officers Present

Angela Abbott	-	Interim Head of Housing
Kim Anderson	-	Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager
Stuart Anderson	-	Deputy Operations Manager
Zoe Borman	-	Governance and Member Support Officer
David Carter	-	Environmental Health Manager
Nicola Marsh	-	Housing Manager
Jean Sharp	-	Governance and Member Support Officer
Steve Summers	-	Chief Operating Officer

### 115. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Cat Tierney and Cllr Andrew Wiles substituted for her.

## **116. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018 were approved as a true record subject to the following amendments:

- The sub-heading “Empty Homes Strategy” needed to be added following the second paragraph on Page 72 of the minutes
- In the last paragraph of Minute 57 on Page 72, ‘EHOC’ should read ‘EHOG’ (Essex Housing Officers Group).

The Chair expressed his disappointment that the anticipated report on a scoping exercise on Housing Garage Sites Report 2018 was not included in the agenda as had been agreed at the 3 July 2018 meeting. Also that since no response from the legal department had been received by officers no update could be given to the Committee regarding investigating the legal implications and restrictions relating to a licence to occupy to Brentwood Youth AFC for Larkins Playing Fields.

## **117. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Wiles declared a non-pecuniary interest and read the following statement:

- I advise the Chair and meeting that I have a potential disclosable pecuniary interest in that my wife is a Council tenant. This may be relevant re Items 6 7 8 and 10. However I have raised this issue with the Council’s Monitoring officer who has reviewed the contents of the reports for Items 6 7 8 and 10 and has concluded that the potential for this to have an effect on such interest or a conflict arising is negligible and may be outweighed by the public benefit of being considered from a tenant’s viewpoint.
- Therefore the Monitoring Officer has granted me dispensation in writing to remain in the chamber and to participate in considering these items.

Chair agreed subject to any appropriate caveat.

## **118. Chairs update Report**

Members noted the following updates from Officers, and a full discussion followed.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

There has been no recent progress in that the Council have broken away from our joint arrangements with Basildon Borough Council to share a public health practitioner.

The council are now in the process of recruiting a practitioner, part time, for the role in Brentwood. 12 applications for the post have been received and the process of arranging interviews has begun.

Essex County Council have only just recently released this year's funding allocation for both the public health practitioner post and relevant projects.

A work plan has been written to spend the funding allocation on the Council's health and wellbeing priorities of ageing well, mental health and wellbeing, and tackling obesity through improvements in physical health.

The Health and Wellbeing Board have not met in the past six months. The next meeting is to be arranged once a practitioner is in post.

### **Larkin Playing Fields**

The Council has been approached by Brentwood Youth AFC with a view to obtaining a 'home base' for the club at Larkin Playing Fields. As the site has a number of covenants relating to it under the conveyance with which it was gifted to the Council it has been necessary to seek legal advice regarding this proposal. Officers are currently awaiting this advice.

In parallel to this Officers, at the request of the club and Essex FA, have attended two on site meetings to determine what can be achieved to improve the condition of pitches at the site and also to bring the currently underused piece of land to the south of the site into use as additional football pitches. The meetings were positive and further discussions are anticipated with both the Essex FA and Football Foundation as to how these improvements may be realised and achieved.

### **Play Area Strategy**

There is a report on this agenda which sets out the recommendations from the Leisure Strategy Working Group which met in July and were agreed at Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 25 July 2018. One of the recommendations from the working group was to undertake an audit of the play areas which will identify the capital programme of investment required for each of the play areas together with the ongoing revenue expenditure, the proximity to alternative play areas and the current usage of the play areas.

An on-line consultation with the public has been launched alongside some face to face consultation as part of the Family Fun Days which asks residents how they use the local play areas and type of equipment they prefer. Feedback from this consultation will be completed at the end of September and maps have been developed which look at a 15minute walk time to play areas in the same vicinity. The information will be used to inform the Council's Play Strategy which will come back to Committee for consideration.

## **Empty Homes**

A meeting has been held with members of Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish Council and Brentwood Housing Trust to focus on long term empty property in the Ingatestone area. It is hoped to concentrate on empty homes in this part of the Borough in collaboration with the Parish Council, with assistance being given by the Housing Trust to manage property and assist landowners to bring properties back into use. It is hoped that this will enable resources to be more targeted and act as a trial for wider activities within the Borough.

Basildon Borough Council are being asked to provide updated data on current empty homes in the Borough and in Ingatestone to provide information for these activities. Officers throughout Essex have also been contacted to look at a county wide solution.

The Chair expressed frustration that no progress had been made on the suggestion to employ two people to progress bringing empty properties back into use. He requested a further report be made at the March 2019 Committee meeting.

## **Garage Sites**

At the July Committee it was approved by Members that Housing Services undertakes a formal exercise to review current usage of Housing Revenue Account ('HRA') garage sites. The purpose of the review is to provide a strategic approach for asset management. Key priorities are the reduction of anti-social behaviour, combating void loss and working towards greater affordable housing provision.

Housing Services have been developing this project and are working closely with the cross-departmental Housing Strategy Team to identify suitable options relating to core sites across the Borough, to bring detailed recommendations back to future Committee.

Members were advised that officers were currently reviewing a list of 80 garage sites.

### **119. Leisure Strategy - King Georges Playing Field**

The report before Members provided an update to the Committee on the progress of the Leisure Strategy on the King George's Playing Fields project. Alliance Leisure Services had been appointed to develop a sustainable business plan for the park.

A summary outline of the report was given by Mrs Kim Anderson who advised that the final business plan was awaited then a further report would be made to the Committee.

Members asked for a time scale for them having sight of the business plan and the Chair advised that he anticipated it would be received in time for the December Committee meeting. The proposals and their feasibility would then be considered.

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

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

**To note the progress on the King George's Playing Fields Project.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

As part of the Council's due diligence in delivering a successful Leisure Strategy, Members and officers need 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 is required that assesses Council owned sports and leisure facilities in order that the Council can continue to work with partners to ensure that appropriate provision is made for the residents of Brentwood. The strategy should not only consider how the Council can provide services, but also how other partners can. The strategy should also use current sports facility evidence to identify strategic priorities to then inform what will be included in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Following this feasibility work, the Council will then be able to determine which projects will be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and those funded by planning obligations.

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

#### **120. Variation in the order of the Agenda**

The Chair **MOVED** and Cllr Poppy **SECONDED** that item 8 – Progress Update on Housing Asset Management, Investment Programme and Compliance - be considered as the next item of business.

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

## **121. Progress Update on Housing Asset Management, Investment Programme and Compliance**

In accordance with the shared service agreement Basildon Borough Council had undertaken a comprehensive asset review including the import of Brentwood Borough Council's asset data into the Basildon Borough Council Keystone Asset Management system. This had provided a central asset register for stock condition information, the development of an asbestos register, centralised compliance data and use as investment planning tool.

This report provided an update to the Committee on the work proposed and currently being undertaken in accordance with the new arrangements.

James Henderson from Basildon Council summarised the contents of the report and advised that an update would be provided at the December Committee meeting.

Members thanked officers for the comprehensive report and enquired whether the HRA was able to meet the budget for such comprehensive works. Mr Henderson advised that the majority of the works could be funded from the current budget.

Following a full discussion Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Poppy **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

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

**To note the contents of the report.**

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

The report highlights progress on Asset Management, Capital Programme and Compliance in Housing. Councillors were invited to comment on the report contents.

## **122. Leisure Strategy Working Group**

The report before Members submitted the report and recommendations of the Leisure Strategy Working Group which met on 9 July 2018, for consideration by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The Working Group consisted of the following Members: Cllrs Hossack, Poppy, Tierney, Davies and Barrett and they were supported by Officers Philip Ruck, Kim Anderson and Stuart Anderson. The Leisure Strategy Working group reported to the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and is then referred on to the Council's Community Health and Housing Committee.

Mrs Kim Anderson presented a summary of the report.

Members requested clarification of the community halls which were to be included in the market engagement exercise. This was to be only the halls currently managed by Brentwood Leisure Trust which did not include Maple Hall.

In response to a Member's question the Chair advised that the Leisure Strategy was considered for pre-scrutiny by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that some controls were built in.

The financial implications the proposed strategy would have on Brentwood Leisure Trust was raised as an issue. Members noted that the BLT contract was due to end in March 2019.

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

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

**That Members note the Leisure Strategy Working Group minutes and consider the recommendations that were agreed at Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 25th July 2018.**

*(Cllr McLaren declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Council's Code of Conduct by virtue of being a member of the Board of Trustees of Brentwood Leisure Trust).*

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

As part of the Council's due diligence in delivering a successful Leisure Strategy, Members and officers need 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 is required that assesses Council owned sports and leisure facilities in order that the Council can continue to work with partners to ensure that appropriate provision is made for the residents of Brentwood. The strategy should not only consider how the Council can provide services, but also how other partners can. The strategy should also use current sports facility evidence to identify strategic priorities and to then inform what will be included in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Following this feasibility work, the Council will then be able to determine which projects will be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and those funded by planning obligations.

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

### **123. Mandatory licensing of HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation)**

The Government had introduced changes to the requirements for mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018.

The effect of the change required mandatory licencing of all HMOs occupied by five or more persons in two or more households. Previously mandatory licensing was required for properties of three storeys or more.

Brentwood Borough Council therefore needed to incorporate the additional properties into the existing system for HMO licencing.

Mr David Carter gave a brief summary of the report and in response to a question advised Members that the onus was on landlords to advise the Council if their property needed to be licensed.

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

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

**Members approve the proposal to incorporate licensing of additional HMOs under the changes to mandatory licensing into the existing system.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

To comply with the changes to legislation and to facilitate processing of new applications for one and two storey properties.

### **124. Housing Audit Update Report**

The report updated the Community, Health & Housing Committee of the outcome of the 2016/17 and 2017/18 Audit reviews for Housing Services. Those Audits were included in the Council's approved Audit plans for 2016/17.

The outcome of the 2016/17 internal audit review was reported to the Audit Committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017 ("Audit Report 1 – May 2017").

The outcome of the 2017/18 internal audit review was reported to the Audit Committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017 ("Audit Report 2 – June 2017").



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

Mrs Angela Abbott gave Members a summary of the report and advised that a further more comprehensive report would be presented at the December Committee meeting.

Members thanked officers for their level of work on this as they found this version far more user friendly.

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 received and noted the progress made from the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018 committee report as outlined in both Audit Reports (as summarised in Appendix A).**
- 2. That the Committee agreed 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.

#### **125. Parking Order Update**

Members were advised that the inclusion of Housing owned car parks in the parking order would enable the Council to enforce parking measures to prevent non-residents parking in the limited number of bays available to residents of specific blocks.

Mrs Nicola Marsh gave Members a summary of the report. She advised that the pilot scheme undertaken at Gibraltar House had been very successful and had resolved parking issues therefore it was proposed to expand the scheme to 32 additional sites.

Members welcomed this report but raised concerns regarding enforcement of the parking restrictions and enabling commercial vehicles working at the properties to park. Officers advised that a Council employee was currently being trained to be able enforce the new restrictions and if additional resources were needed these would be provided. The owners of commercial

vehicles working in relevant properties would be able to buy special permits and visitor permits would be available. Following a consultation with residents, parking restrictions would only be in force between 9.00am and 5.00pm.

A report needed to be made to Policy, Performance and Resources Committee then a formal consultation would follow and it was anticipated that the enforcement of the extended parking restrictions area would begin in April 2019.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Hossack and **SECONDED** by Cllr Poppy to approve the recommendations in the report with a proposed addition:

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

1. That the Committee approved the inclusion of the listed car parks to be included in a parking order (Appendix A), to enable enforcement and relieve pressure on parking for Council Tenants and Leaseholders.
2. That the Committee passes on the request for the additional sites to be included in the parking order to be considered at the next available Policy, Performance and Resources Committee meeting.
3. That a consultation takes place with residents to outline the options with regards to enforcement and take into account any preferences or requirements for specific sites.

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

The Committee was asked to consider the success of those parking restrictions already in place on housing sites and the reduction of resident complaints in relation to this.

The Committee was asked to consider the length of time that these parking issues have been ongoing, and the lack of control that Housing has at present to address the problems without formal enforcement.

#### **126. Former Tenant Debt Recovery Policy**

The report set out proposals for a new Former Tenant Debt Recovery Policy to be implemented within the Housing Department.

The Policy would provide the Council with the ability to effectively recover Former Tenant rent arrears as well as any arrears on sub accounts such as court costs or removal costs that were associated with closed accounts.

Mrs Nicola Marsh gave Members a summary of the report.

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 Committee approve the Former Tenant Debt Recovery Policy.**
2. **Recommendation is made to Policy, Projects and Resources Committee for approval.**

**Reasons for Recommendations**

To ensure the Council is equipped in recovering former tenant debts, reducing the pressure on the budget restraints.

To provide a robust procedure that meets government guidelines on the recovery of debt.

**127. Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

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The meeting ended at 8.30pm