

# Minutes

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## Community, Health and Housing Committee Monday, 19th June, 2017

### Attendance

Cllr Hossack (Chair)	Cllr Mrs Hubbard
Cllr Poppy (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Ms Rowlands
Cllr Clarke	Cllr Ms Sanders
Cllr Cloke	Cllr Wiles
Cllr Mrs Davies	

### Apologies

### Substitute Present

### Also Present

Cllr Barrell	
Cllr Chilvers	
Chris Price	Tenants Talkback Representative
Linda Skinner	Tenants Talkback Representative

### Officers Present

Kim Anderson	-	Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager
David Carter	-	Environmental Health Manager
Claire Mayhew	-	Governance and Member Support Officer
Stuart Morris	-	Housing Options Team Leader
Angela Williams	-	Interim Head of Housing
Nicola Marsh	-	Housing Manager
Stuart Anderson	-	Deputy Operations Manager
Tracey Lilley	-	Community Safety Manager

## 22. Apologies for Absence

No apologise were received.

**23. Minutes of the Community, Health and Leisure Committee held on 6th March 2017**

The minutes from the Community, Health & Leisure Committee meeting held on 6th March 2017 were approved as a true record, subject to some clarification from Cllr Mrs Davies on Min 299 (Leisure Strategy). The Chair informed the committee that a cross party working group will still be established, but under the Corporate Project Scrutiny Committee and requested that Cllr Mrs Davies membership to the working group continues.

Cllr Hubbard asked that her requested in Min 298 (Parish Council Liaison) for Warley Conservative Society to be included in the Parish Council Liaison Meetings, as a representative for the Warley area, be added. Kim Anderson, will review this request.

**24. Minutes of the Environment and Housing Management Committee held on 9th March 2017**

The minutes of the Environment and Housing Management Committee meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017 were approved as a true meeting.

**25. Verbal update**

Updates were received from Officers on:

**Empty Homes**

At the meeting of the Environment and Housing Management Committee on 9th March 2017 Members recommended to identify and prioritise the current properties which have been empty for over two years in the Borough and to approve initial contact with owners to seek resolution. The initial contact had been approved by the Chairman following draft copies of the letter being circulated.

Copies of the letter and an Empty Homes Questionnaire have been produced and have now been sent to 75 owners identified as paying 150% Council Tax as the properties have been empty for over two years. Copies of the documents and any feedback from this initial contact will be provided as part of the subsequent report which is intended to be produced for the September meeting to outline the proposals for an Empty Homes Strategy.

A copy of the letter and questionnaire will be appendixes to a forthcoming report.

**Landlord's Forum**

As part of our ongoing work with landlords in the Borough, we are planning to hold a Landlords Forum meeting this year to liaise and consult with our Private Sector Landlords. These meetings were held annually, but due to reduced attendance at the last meeting had not been rearranged; it is hoped

that we will be able to encourage more to attend and we are intending to arrange a meeting in September.

### **Draft revised Essex HMO Standards**

The Government has been consulting on proposals to expand the licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to incorporate two-storey HMOs into licensing. In preparation for this possible increase in licensed HMOs the Essex authorities are revising the HMO Standards document which is currently used as a reference and guidance across the County on suitable standards for multiple occupation.

When the draft has been completed it is intended to consult across Essex largely through websites and engagement with relevant groups such as the Landlord's Forum.

It is likely that the draft will be produced before the next Committee in which case we will carry out the consultation exercise and report any feedback with a report proposing adoption of the revised standard in the Borough to co-ordinate with the other Essex Councils.

### **Public Open Space Protection Order**

The Community Safety team are working with Essex Police to secure a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to deal with a number of key community safety issues being experienced in the Town Centre. The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Crime & Policing Act 2015 introduced a new power for Local Authorities to obtain a PSPO to deal with a particular nuisance in a particular area that is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life for those in the local community. It can prohibit certain things or require specific things to be done.

The Order will seek to tackle issues relating to nuisance vehicles in William Hunter Way car park, aggressive begging in the High Street and anti-social behaviour within the multi storey car park in Coptfold Road, Brentwood.

### **Repairs Contracts**

#### **Three Arch Bridge – Balcony Contract**

All balconies are now completed. Some outstanding remedial works to tidy up. Contractors have until February 2018 to complete the remedial works. Modification to the flooring on some balconies needs to be completed due to water going over the balconies. The modifications will be authorized this week with works starting soon after.

#### **Drake House Boiler Replacement**

Practical works complete. Site almost clear with minor debris clearance left to complete. 5 properties still require access to fit meters, Brentwood Borough Council enquiring about court action to gain access.

### **Stock Condition Survey**

All surveys completed. Data and photos to be sent in full to Brentwood Borough Council week commencing 19th June 2017. Pennington's were asked to complete 600 verification surveys, of these 600, 100 Properties could not be re-surveyed due to non access.

### **Planned Maintenance**

The planned works program plan is nearing completion, we aim to be in a position to issue works in stages with the first stage starting in August 2017.

### **Arrears Campaigns**

#### **April's campaign was in Warley.**

Reports generated 61 accounts in arrears:

25 - Direct debit payments.

6 - Last action clear account

30 - Visited

- The accounts on a Direct debit payment method were checked prior to leaving the office and payments were paid in accordance with the direct debit frequencies. These accounts amount to approximately £3,321.67 worth of arrears recorded for Warley.
- Face to face contact at the door from 5 tenants. This resulted in a promise of £500.00 lump sum payment from one tenant, and another stating they will clear their balance of £177.94 and set up a monthly direct debit online. The 25 properties we had a no response from were hand delivered a letter advising them of the focus on rent (attached) this will hopefully alert them to the arrears and prompt payment or at least contact.

#### **May's campaign was Three Arch & Hutton South**

Three Arch Bridge: 60 tenants were visited

- We managed to speak to 16 tenants, arrangements were made with some, a few confirmed they had already paid, some promised to pay and the others were waiting on HB.
- We held a surgery from 11am – 12noon and 2 tenants attended the surgery to discuss their rent account.
- The last fortnight's arrears figure was £34,522.24. This FN arrears figure has reduced to £30,175.02, I think part of that has been due to the success of the arrears campaign and some backdated HB into accounts.

Hutton South: 47 tenants were visited

- We managed to speak to 14 tenants, arrangements were made with some; others promised to pay (several lump sum payments now showing) a few were waiting on HB.
- We held a surgery from 2pm to 3pm and 4 tenants attended to discuss their rent account.
- The previous fortnight's arrears figure for the patch was £31,029.16. This fortnights arrears figure for the patch has reduced to £27,601.40 following the campaign.
- Overall the arrears campaign for Three Arch Bridge and Hutton South was a success, officers feel the campaign for these patches have been the most successful to date.

### **June's campaign was Brentwood Town Centre & Brentwood Station Area.**

41 Properties visited

Brentwood Town Centre– arrears figure £23,425.72

13 Tenants spoken to and advice given

2 Tenants attended Chichester House surgery (Although one was a transfer query). Both were residents at Chichester House)

29 Properties visited

Brentwood Station Area –Arrears figure £22,013.09

12 Tenants spoken to and advice given

No one attended Masefield Court surgery

- All 'No response' addresses were lettered with rent statements provided in sealed envelopes and all notes have been updated on Orchard.
- This was the most successful campaign at the door, and one of the lesser successful surgeries.

### **Performance Presentations**

A presentation on Key Performance Indicators within the Housing department was given by Mrs Marsh. This covered rent collection, re-let times of properties, temporary accommodation, gas servicing and repairs performance.

Members asked for a review of the contractors Service Level Agreement be undertaken. Mrs Williams advise the committee that she is considering appointing a Project Officer will monitor the performance of contractors.

These presentations were noted by the Committee.

### **Fire Audit of High Rise Flats – Grenfell Tower Fire**

An inspection has been carried out on the three main high rise blocks within the borough; Masefield Court, Gibraltar House and Drake House. No cladding has been used on any of the Council's flats.

Full Fire Inspection to be carried out by the end of the week. Letters have been sent to all residents in flat's owned by Brentwood Borough Council.

A few issues have been brought to our attention; Sprinkler systems, replacement fire doors, reviewing the Stay Put Policy, CCTV, Storage Areas, Fire Assembly Points and Fly-tipping.

Cllr Hubbard, requested to possibility of the rubbish area in Gibraltar House being cleaned out and made in to a storage area for prams, bikes etc. to remove this items from the corridors. Mrs Williams confirmed that it will not be advised.

Cllr Chilvers, congratulated the officer on the work already undertaken. Fly-tipping is a big issue at Sir Francis Way and has requested CCTV to be installed. General clutter from residents extending their living space into the corridors.

Members requested Fire Evacuation Training to be implemented for all residents living in Council's owned flats.

Mrs Williams to circulated Fire and Police Report to all Members. No requested from Kensington Council to accommodate any family evacuated from Grenfell Tower has been received.

## **26. 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.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Poppy **SECONDED** the recommendation in the report and a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was:

### **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**

- 1 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.**
- 2. 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.**
- 3. The Housing Manager be requested to arrange appropriate training of the representatives.**

## **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

This is an annual item and is to recognise two member of Tenant Talkback to be able to attend committee meetings where they can comment but not vote. This item must be annual as the members of Tenant Talkback are subject to change.

### **27. Service Charge Policy**

The report sets out the background and recommendation to adopt a formal written Service Charge Strategy. The strategy will allow for the implementation of a pricing mechanism relating to the servicing of Council owned HRA blocks/schemes (circa 48 blocks).

Service charging has not been reviewed since circa 1998 and there is currently no strategic document to underpin policy.

Service charges should apply to all residents of communal blocks and sheltered schemes (community housing). Service charges are currently contained within the global rent figure rather than being specifically listed and apportioned. In simple terms HRA income is not matching expenditure.

Rent charges (general stock) are currently subject to the Government's mandatory 1% annual decrease. Having a combined rent/service charge figure means that income for service provision is also subject to an effective 1% decrease which is unnecessary. The Service Charge Strategy 2017 (Appendix A) seeks to address this income loss.

The Service Charge Strategy 2017 outlines the reasoning and direction relating to service charging. If adopted a Service Charge Policy containing a full pricing mechanism will be submitted at the next Committee.

Cllr Mrs Davies, requested a minor amended to standards within the draft policy from reasonable to good, this was noted by the Officer.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Poppy **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report and a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was:

## **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**

- 1. That the Committee formally approve Option 2 (to implement the 'Service Charge Strategy 2017' (Appendix A)).**
- 2. That the Committee approve the development of a 'Service Charge Policy' (with pricing mechanism) for submission at the next committee.**

## **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

Option 2 is recommended as the most financially viable option for the Council and supports the '*Getting our House in Order*' transformation programme for

Housing Services. It also ensures that Financial Services can code charges accurately against the Estates where services have been provided.

Taking no further action will fail to advance corporate priorities and would de stabilise financial resources.

‘At cost’ service charging of Tenants/Leaseholders in blocks/schemes introduces a fair and balanced approach across the entire housing stock. It also reflects in real terms the advantages those households currently benefit from and protects against service reduction elsewhere.

*A Service Charge Strategy* will allow the Council to:

- **Make an efficiency saving of approximately £13,000.00 per annum (£65,000.00 over 5 years)**
- Meet its legal requirements.
- Viably fund block/scheme service provision within the HRA housing stock.
- Underpin and maintain service provision for residents.
  - Support the corporate commitment to reducing expenditure and providing financially coherent and viable policies.
  - Structure the Council’s approach to service charging for Tenants and Leaseholders, allowing for greater transparency and scrutiny of service provision.

The financial mechanism for ‘at cost’ service charging would be submitted for scrutiny and approval by Committee as part of the formal annual rent-setting process.

## **28. Funding Strategy**

The Funding Strategy (Appendix A) sets out the Council's strategic priorities and future funding plans for supporting the local voluntary and community sector through a variety of funding schemes. With reductions to funding across the public sector, Brentwood Borough Council needs to ensure that any funding it gives to organisations is targeted, supports the Council's priorities and provides effective support for the local community.

The Strategy also sets out a statement of principles in relation to future funding, includes the proposed governance arrangements that will be implemented to review and report funding and the timescales within which these will occur.



Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Ms Sanders **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report and a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was:

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**

The Funding Strategy will ensure that the funding the Council allocates is targeted in the appropriate areas to support those most in need. The Council also needs to ensure that resources are allocated appropriately when looking to maximise external funding opportunities.

*(Cllr Mrs Davies declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Council's Code of Conduct by virtue of being a volunteer for Brentwood Community Print, Cllr Ms Rowlands declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Council's Code of Conduct by virtue of being the Council's representative for the Citizens Advice Bureau (Brentwood) and Cllr Poppy declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Council's Code of Conduct by virtue of being a volunteer driver for Brentwood Community Transport).*

**29. Safeguarding Strategy 2017-2020**

Safeguarding includes all forms of activity that aims to protect or promote the welfare of individuals and/or groups of people. This includes activity which ensures prevention of harm, safe recruitment, staff training, awareness raising, provision of activities designed to promote inclusion, personalised risk management and risk assessments, confidential data storage, information sharing and making referrals. Brentwood Borough Council's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures provides guidance and procedures that can support staff and elected Members on their legal obligations to safeguard children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

The existing Safeguarding Policy and Procedures has been reviewed and updated to ensure that it complies with the latest legislation to provide guidance to staff and elected Members. The revised Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (Appendix A) is before Members to approve.

Cllr Mrs Hubbard, enquired about the DBS check for outside organisation undertaken events within the Borough. Kim Anderson, informed Cllr Hubbard of the regulatory and non-regulatory contact criteria is within the appendix. That no DBS check is required for one off events and where parents are present.

Cllr Ms Davies, requested Safeguarding Training and DBS Register to be implemented for all Members.

Cllr Barrell, thanked officers for a very comprehensive report and asked if Safeguarding includes all forms of activity that aims to protect or promote the welfare of individuals and/or groups of people. This includes activity which ensures prevention of harm, safe recruitment, staff training, awareness raising, provision of activities designed to promote inclusion, personalised risk

management and risk assessments, confidential data storage, information sharing and making referrals. Brentwood Borough Council's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures provides guidance and procedures that can support staff and elected Members on their legal obligations to safeguard children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

The existing Safeguarding Policy and Procedures has been reviewed and updated to ensure that it complies with the latest legislation to provide guidance to staff and elected Members. The revised Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (Appendix A) is before Members to approve.

Cllr Mrs Hubbard, enquired about the DBS check for outside organisation undertaken events within the Borough. Kim Anderson, informed Cllr Hubbard of the regular and non-regular contact criteria within the appendix, which confirms that no DBS check are required for one off events and where parents are present.

Cllr Ms Davies, requested Safeguarding Training and DBS Register to be implemented for all Members.

Cllr Barrell, thanked officers for a very comprehensive report and asked if Witchcraft Crime could be included in the policy. This is noted by the Officer.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Poppy **SECONDED** the recommendation in the report and a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was:

#### **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**

- 1. That Members agree to the revised Safeguarding Policy and Procedures as set out in Appendix A.**

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (Appendix A) has been reviewed and revised to take into account any new legislation and emerging issues, so that the Council can meet its safeguarding obligations and ensures that staff, Members and the public are aware of safeguarding, and that they can access appropriate support services if and when required.

### **30. Better Care and Disabled Facilities Grant Funding**

The report seeks authority to consider appropriate ways to best utilise the capital funding received from the Better Care Fund to support disabled facilities and enable residents to continue to live independently.

Cllr Ms Sanders, this grant funding bonds nicely with the Health and Wellbeing and I strongly support option 4 (Home from Hospital Scheme). Draw in links between Social Service, local hospital and Occupational Health to return elderly patients back to their homes with the necessary requirements for their rehabilitation.

Cllr Mrs Hubbard, expressed concerns about patients requiring rehabilitation beds before return home. Liaise with Brentwood Community Hospital maybe required.

Cllr Cloke, recommended Brentwood Access Group as a worthy benefactor to the funding and requested more communication between Planning and Housing Officer relating to access requirements.

Cllr Chilvers, more marketing of the funding is required. Some residents still do not have internet access and are aware of the service. Fully support the Handy Person Service and would benefit many with day to day maintenance in their homes.

With helping with Tracy Lilley and Community Safety, door chains can be fixed with advice and support from the Police and Fire Service on making their homes safe and secure.

David Carter, informed the committee that Disabled Facilities grant funding is means tested. Cllr Chilvers felt that residents would pay for the service, if they didn't meet the criteria.

The Chair confirmed that Officers and Members working together on the favoured option, Home from Hospital Scheme and Handy Person Services going forward.

Promotion of this service to be undertaken by the Communications Dept, with the suggestion of using Community Safety Roadshow.

After a full discussion, Cllr Ms Sanders **MOVED** and Cllr Mrs Davies **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report and a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was:

#### **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**

- 1 That officers investigate potential solutions to fully utilise Better Care funding provided for the benefit of vulnerable residents in the Borough**
- 2 Assessment of the options available will be made and determined following consultation and agreement from the Community, Health and Housing Committee**

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

To make effective use of Better Care Fund allocations to the Council to provide assistance to those most in need with the aim of integrating with medical care facilities to reduce strain on these resources.

### **31. Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business.

The meeting concluded at 20.43