

Minutes

Environment, Enforcement & Housing Committee Tuesday, 14th January, 2020

Attendance

Cllr Hossack (Chair)	Cllr Clarke
Cllr Kerslake (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Laplain
Cllr Dr Barrett	Cllr Mrs Pearson
Cllr Bridge	Cllr Mrs Pound

Apologies

Cllr Naylor

Also Present

Cllr Reed

Officers Present

Phoebe Barnes	-	Corporate Finance Manager
Greg Campbell	-	Director of Operations
Mike Dun	-	Trade Waste Officer
Darren Laver	-	Operations Manager, Operational Services
Tracey Lilley	-	Interim Director of Housing & Enforcement
Alan Marsh	-	Arboricultural
Nicola Marsh	-	Housing Manager
Jacqueline Van Mellaerts	-	Director of Corporate Resources
Stuart Morris	-	Housing Options Manager

313. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Naylor.

314. Minutes of the previous meeting

Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee meeting held on 24 September 2019 were a true record.

315. Chairs Report

Members noted the updates provided in the Chair's report.

316. Carbon Absorption – Creation of Woodland at Hutton Country Park.

The report sought approval for Brentwood Council officers to progress a business case to create a new woodland through planting trees in part of Hutton Country Park to create a woodland for residents and increase carbon capture.

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

Following a discussion a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that

- 1. A business case be developed which will consider the development of a woodland at Hutton Country Park including consultation.**
- 2. A public consultation be undertaken as part of the business case development and the outcome be reported back to a future meeting.**

Reasons for Recommendation

Demonstrates the Council's commitment to improving the environment by seeking to develop environmentally beneficial projects. Further that the woodland project could be mainly grant funded so it appears there could be little impact to the budget.

317. Carbon Absorption and Reduction - Creation of Pine Tree Plantation

The report sought approval for Brentwood Council officers to progress a business case to consider the development of a pine tree plantation in order to develop a commercial opportunity to sell locally produced and farmed Christmas trees.

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

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

- 1. That officers develop a business case to consider the creation of a pine tree plantation which would be used to provide locally sourced Christmas Trees.**

2. To delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Director of Operations, Chair and Vice Chair of Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee to agree to progress the project if it delivers financial and environmental benefits.

Reasons for Recommendation

Demonstrates the Council's commitment to improving the environment by seeking to develop an opportunity to grow and sell locally produced pine trees for Christmas.

318. Carbon Reduction - Reduction by using locally sourced timber

The report sought approval for Brentwood Council officers to progress a business case to consider using locally sourced timber to enable positive environmental and financial outcomes through carbon absorption, carbon reduction, the sale of harvested timber and use of timber for local projects.

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

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

1. To agree to the development of a business case to consider the need, the market and the benefits both environmentally and economically of progressing a scheme to utilise locally sourced timber for use in local projects, timber sale and other timber sales (off cuts/wood chip).
2. To delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Director of Operations, Chair and Vice Chair of Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee to agree to progress the project to utilise locally sourced timber.

Reasons for Recommendation

Supports the Council's commitment to develop and consider projects to protect the environment. Through the harvesting of timber from Brentwood owned woodlands in order to reduce the borough's reliance on imported tree related products. The Council's own timber has already been used in the refurbishment of a prominent bench in Shenfield High Street. Such incentives contribute to reducing the carbon footprint by the authority. A business case would develop these opportunities into viable solutions which can then be implemented.

319. Carbon Reduction - Improving Vehicle Mobility Options Across the Borough

The report extended the wider 'Green Agenda' by considering alternative car provision method for Brentwood Council Staff to utilise for work purposes.

Following any success of the implementation of such a scheme a wider agenda for 'greener' car mobility would be considered.

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

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

To delegate authority to the S151 Officer in consultation with the Director of Operations and the Chair and Vice-Chair of Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee to agree the approval of a contract for the introduction of an electric vehicle pool car scheme for staff use on business.

Reasons for Recommendation

The recommendation develops the council's approach to reduce CO2 emissions and continues to make practical changes that deliver tangible results.

It demonstrates change while a further business case is developed to look to implement a wider roll out.

320. Fees & Charges

Members were reminded that fees and charges made by the Council for various services were reviewed on an annual basis by the relevant Committees relating to the services provided. Recommended amendments to the 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 Kerslake to agree the recommendations in the report.

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

To agree to the proposed charges for 2020/21 as attached in Appendix A-K subject to the annual budget setting process.

Reasons for Recommendation

Officers review fees and charges annually and this will be used to inform the 2020/21 budget setting process.

321. Rent Setting

The report sought the recommendations of the Committee on the proposed rent and service charge levels for 2020/21.

The recommendations would be considered by Policy, Resources & Economic Development 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 4th March 2020.

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

Following a discussion a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED** to recommend:

1. **To increase rent by CPI plus 1% (Total 2.7% increase) for social and Affordable Housing Properties.**
2. **Increase Shared Ownership and General Fund Property Rents by CPI plus 1%.**
3. **To apply formula rent to all new social rent tenancies from April 2020.**
4. **To apply a 2% increase to Garage Rents.**
5. **To note that service charges have been reconciled and charges have been increased or decreased so they are brought in line with actual costs and that no increase will exceed CPI plus 1%.**

Reasons for Recommendation

The recommendation is to follow government guidelines which proposes to increase rents by CPI plus 1%, for 2020/21 this is 2.7%

This increase to rents is a welcomed one, allowing the HRA to have certainty around rent setting and it's forecast Business Plan.

The proposed increase will contribute to funding the current services provided as well supporting the development of the capital programme and housing development plans.

When considering the rent setting the following assumptions have been considered:

- The financial viability of the HRA business plan
- Provision for the repairs & maintenance capital programme
- Development for new homes in the borough
- Affordability for tenants

322. Key Performance Indicators (Presentation Only)

The Housing Manager gave a Powerpoint presentation updating Members on repairs etc undertaken in Quarters 1 – 4 of 2019 and monitored using Key Performance Indicators.

323. Housing Audit Update

The report before the Committee was intended to update Members of the progress 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 originally reported to the Audit Committee on the 27th September 2017 ("Audit Report 1 – May 2017").

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

Both Audit reports would enable the Housing Service to concentrate on specific areas highlighted by the Audit recommendations to implement essential service improvements as part of the transformation programme 'Getting Our House in Order'.

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

Following a discussion 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 3rd September committee report as outlined in both Audit Reports (as summarised in Appendix A).**
- 2. That the Committee agree that a further report on progress made on implementing the recommendations is presented to the next Committee as a final report.**

Reasons for Recommendation

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

324. Placement Policy

Members were reminded that Brentwood Borough Council ('the Council') had statutory and non-statutory duties and powers to provide accommodation to homeless individuals and families.

The policy outlined in the report related to provision of non-permanent accommodation.

The policy (appendix A) was intended to provide transparency and direction in relation to existing and future out-of-Borough placements and offers.

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

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

That the Committee approves the 'Placement Policy 2020' (Appendix A).

Reasons for Recommendation

Option 1 is recommended as the most desirable options for the Council, ensuring transparency and legal compliancy. It will provide a clear document for applicants to hold the Council to account.

Taking no further action will potentially leave the Council more vulnerable to Judicial Review and would not represent working towards a modern and effective housing service.

325. Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

Members were advised that the current strategic document "*Homeless Prevention Strategy 2017 - 2020*" was due to expire at the end of the year. To forward the aims of the Service and Council a new document was required to outline in strategic terms proposed service provision.

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 (*'the Strategy'*) would set out the approach to dealing with both homelessness and rough sleeping.

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

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

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

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

1. That the Committee approved the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.
2. That the Committee formally approved the use of a public online consultation concerning the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.
3. That the Committee receives the final version of the Strategy for ratification at a future Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee meeting.

Reasons for Recommendation

Option 1 is recommended as the correct option for the Council, ensuring transparency and legal compliancy. It will provide a clear document for applicants to hold the Council to account.

326. Repairs and Maintenance Update

The report before Members contained exempt information and was therefore considered in private session.

The report provided the committee with a progress update on matters in relation to:

- Axis Contract
- Stock Condition Survey
- Planned maintenance programme
- Compliance
- Keystone
- Snakes Hill

This update report followed on from the previous progress report on these matters which was provided at the 24 September 2019 Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee meeting.

Members' questions were responded to and the report was noted.

327. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 8.45pm
