

Minutes

Housing and Health Committee Wednesday, 7th January, 2015

Attendance

Cllr Carter (Chair)	Cllr Le-Surf
Cllr Mrs Davies (Vice-Chair)	Cllr McCheyne
Cllr Baker	Cllr Parker
Cllr Mrs Henwood	Cllr Tee
Cllr Mrs Hones	
Cllr Mrs Hubbard	

Also Present

Cllr Barrett	
Chris Price	Co-Optee (Tenants Talkback Representative)
Maureen Montgomery	Co-Optee (Tenants Talkback Representative)

Officers Present

Keith Carter	Property Manager
Helen Gregory	Interim Head of Housing
Claire Hayden	Governance and Member Support Officer
Chris Potter	Monitoring Officer & Head of Support Service
Angela Williams	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)

367. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

368. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the Housing and Health Committee held on 5th November 2014 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Cllr McCheyne asked for a update on the Garage Site Development. Under the current timetable, submission for Planning Permission will happen in March 2015.

369. Performance Report

In addition to the standard performance information the report recommended the implementation of a modernisation programme of the Housing department over the next 12 months. The modernisation programme – Getting our house in order - will be extensive and involve an improvement plan for each service area (excluding Sheltered Housing). Staff will be attending workshops in December 2014 to discuss the programme. Regular updates will be provided in future Committee meetings.

The report also updated Committee on the final stage of the Repairs review, to review the Office/client side of the Repairs team and provide a permanent solution for the Property Manager role. It is proposed to recruit a Property Manager on a 12 month fixed contract; while we complete the modernisation programme. To mitigate the interim risk an internal 6 /12 fixed term, Team Leader secondment is recommended. This will be funded from savings elsewhere in the Property team structure.

Officers will research opportunities for shared services with other local authorities. It was agreed that Thurrock Council will provide assistance with the repairs, leasehold and caretaker services review as they had recently successfully being through a transformation programme

The performance update was supplemented with information on complaints as requested by Cllr Ross Carter.

Members asked for a review of the temporary accommodation KPI and a breakdown the different reasons/household composition be reported to the next Housing and Health Committee.

A motion was MOVED by Cllr Carter and SECONDED by Cllr Mrs Davies to approve the recommendation set out in the report, subject to an amendment to 2.5

2.5 That the Committee notes the impact of the recommendations ~~2.4 & 2.5~~ 2.2 & 2.3 is a saving to the HRS of £12,500 p.a.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY to:

2.1 The Committee is asked to monitor the performance information submitted within the report.

- 2.2 The Committee is requested to note the implementation of the housing modernisation programme and the future direction of travel.
That the committee approves the deletion of a vacant surveyor post.
- 2.3 The Committee approves the commissioning of Thurrock Council to assist with reviews of Repairs, leasehold management and caretaking.
- 2.4 That Committee grants approval to increase the responsibilities in an existing Property team role to create a Secondment (6/12 month) opportunity for a Team Leader post for internal recruitment.
- 2.5 That the Committee notes the impact of recommendations 2.2 & 2.3 is a saving on the HRA of £12,500 p.a.
- 2.6 That the Committee approves officers to explore possible opportunities with other neighbouring local authorities to work to develop its Property team and achieve a cost effective service delivery.

370. Rent Setting

The reports seeks the recommendations of the Housing and Health Committee on the proposed new rent levels for 2015/16. The recommendations will be considered by the Finance and Resource Committee on the 11 February 2015 when the final recommendation will be made as part of the budget process; the final decision will be made by Full Council on the 4th March 2015.

Co-optee members of the committee welcomed the new rent formula.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Carter and **SECONDED** by Cllr Davies to agree to recommendation set out in the report.

Cllr Le-surf **MOVED** that recommendations 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 are moved on block and a requested a recorded vote be taken on recommendation 2.4 in accordance with Rule 9.5 of the Council's Procedure Rules. This was accepted by the chair.

After a discussion, recommendation 2.4 was withdrawn, and will be brought back to a future committee.

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

- 2.1 Members agree to increase Rent to CPI plus 1% from April 2015.**

- 2.2 Members agree to freeze the proposed Services Charges at 2014/15 levels as outlined within the report, which will then be incorporated within the 2015/16 Budget, and that a further report be presented to this Committee providing details of the outcome of the planned review of the current charging policies, which will then inform the 2016/17 charging levels.**

- 2.3 Members agree to applying the formula rent all new tenancies from April 2015/16.**

371. Armed Forces Community Covenant

As part of the recent review of the Council's Allocation policy additional preference/exemption was awarded to members of the Armed Forces and their families in regard to the Local Connection criteria. These groups are exempt from having to demonstrate a local connection and are able to join the housing waiting list.

However, having reviewed other Local Authorities' Allocations Policies it has demonstrated that we need to consider providing additional support to members of the Armed Forces community by publishing a supplementary document alongside the Council's Allocation Policy.

The supplementary document, in the short term will address the immediate housing issues members of the Armed Forces community face, while in the long term further consideration can be made in a commitment to an Armed Forces Community Covenant.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Carter and **SECONDED** by Cllr McCheyne to received the recommendation set out in the report.

RESOLVED UNANIMIOUSLY to agree:

- 2.1 That approval is given to Option 3 to develop a tailored Housing Advice Service aimed to address the needs of the Armed Forces Community.**

372. Resource Room Development at Hutton Community Centre

It had been suggested by resident groups that a community resource could be developed and be based at the Hutton Community Centre.

The report of the Hutton Community Centre Task and Finish Group to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 28 October 2014 made reference to a plan put forward to possibly utilise the former cellar for a Housing lead project to create a community advice facility.

The suggested plan was to use the former cellar once it was refurbished as a drop in centre for residents to use computers and speak with volunteers about a number of issues. These would include and not restricted to making universal credit online application, choice based lettings bids, job applications and using the internet in general.

Following a full discussion, a motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Cater and **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs Davies to received the recommendations set out in the report.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY to:

2.1 It had been suggested by resident groups that a community resource could be developed and be based at the Hutton Community Centre.

2.2 The report of the Hutton Community Centre Task and Finish Group to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 28 October 2014 made reference to a plan put forward to possibly utilise the former cellar for a Housing lead project to create a community advice facility.

2.3 The suggested plan was to use the former cellar once it was refurbished as a drop in centre for residents to use computers and speak with volunteers about a number of issues. These would include and not restricted to making universal credit online application, choice based lettings bids, job applications and using the internet in general.

373. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

374. Local Government Act 1972 - Exclusion of Press and Public

Not applicable.
