



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

24 JANUARY 2017

PRESENT:-

S. Lumley (Vice-Chair) (Stand in Chair)  
P Chandler, T Culley, J. Douglas, M.C.R Graham MBE,  
P. Posnett

Observer  
Councillor David Wright

Chief Executive  
Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods, Central Services Manager,  
Welfare, Housing & Revenue Manager, Corporate Policy Manager  
Administrative Assistant for Communities and Neighbourhoods

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C42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Beaken, Councillor Manderson and Councillor Pearson.

C43. MINUTES

The minutes from the previous meeting on the 16 November 2016 were authorised to be signed by the Chairman during the next Committee once spelling and grammar amendments are made.

C44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this time.

C45. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations received from other committees.

C46. UPDATE ON DECISIONS

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted an update on decisions from the previous meeting of the Committee which was noted by Members.

**RESOLVED** that

- C13 was to be presented during this meeting.
- C29 was to be presented during this meeting.
- C39 – Phase 4 of the 2016/17 planned programme has progressed and will be completed by the end of March 2017.

**C47. HRA BUDGET/RENT SETTING REPORT**

A Joint report was submitted by the Heads of Central Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods in order to set the rents of Council dwellings approve HRA estimates for 2017-18 and set the working balance for 2017-18.

The Central Services Manager presented a brief overview of the recommendations and asked Members to note that recommendation 2.6 was to be disregarded in light of no figures being included in the Housing repairs contract and review report going to the Ad Hoc committee on the 1 February 2017.

The Central Services Manager presented the report bringing Members' attention to the keys point:

- 3.1 (b) – Noting in 2015 the Chancellor promised to reduce social rents by 1%. This 1% reduction was announced to continue for 4 years and has a cumulative effect on the 30 years business plan of approximately £31m.
- 3.2- Presenting the HRA estimates summary, noting that the carried forward working balance is broadly within the target working balance of £750,000 and does allow for some flexibility.
- 3.3- Noting that an extended pilot for 2017-18 for Housing Association tenants to benefit from Right to buy was announced in November 2016. This deferral means that no high value asset payments will be taken from Local Housing authorities in 2017-18.
- 3.4- Noting the government has now decided not to continue with the Pay to Stay policy in it current compulsory form, therefore there are no cost implications from this policy.
- 3.5- (a) Noting with the movement to Universal Credit the Councils most vulnerable tenants on housing benefit will now be paid directly to them 4 weeks in arrears rather than directly to the Council as their landlord. (b) Noting that within the estimates and additional contribution of £30k in 2017-18 to total £80k from the General Fund to the HRA to support this via the Me and my Learning Scheme.
- 3.6- Noting officers have updated the HRA Business Plan and the refreshed document will be brought to this Committee in March 2017.
- 3.7- Noting the warden service is removed and the Intensive Housing Support Management Service will become operational providing Intensive Housing support.

A Member noted their disappointment in the Government decreasing to 1% and feel it may be worth while to write a letter to parliament about this. This member also stated that due to the change of the way benefits will be paid with regards to Universal Credit the council will need to be paying close attention and staying on top of this from day 1 as this could be difficult to guarantee tenants use this money to pay rent and council tax.

The Welfare, Housing & Revenue Manager noted that the council do have good recovery mechanisms in place such as tenants paying in advance and a lot of tenants still want the money to be paid to the landlord.

A Member noted that due to a large number of Universal Credit claimers that will be tempted to spend these large amounts of money, its would be helpful to have a report on how this is going brought back to this Committee in the future. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that yes they will be very proactive in dealing with this and a report will be presented to a future CSA committee meeting.

A brief discussion was had over high value housing regarding the mixed success results from the pilots that were ran in the housing association, causing a re think over how this operates.

The Chair questioned how the cleaning is currently done. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that currently deep cleans are done periodically however the Council cannot keep procuring ad hoc deep cleans and that long term procurement is being sought which will be brought back to this Committee.

The Chair sought a proposer and seconder for Recommendations 2.1-2.5. All Members were in favour.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) a rent decrease of 1% for all Council dwellings for 2017-18 with effect from 3 April 2017 be approved and that when a property is re-let the rent continues to be brought into line with the Governments formula rent;
- (2) the estimates for 2017-18 be approved subject to the receipt of the limit rent Determination with delegated authority being given to the Head of Central Services in consultation with the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods to amend the estimated working balance based on any changes to the determination;
- (3) the charge for communal cleaning will remain at its 2016/17 amount whilst a new contract is procured, with any savings or additional costs to be included in the fees and charges report to be brought to this committee in September 2017 for the 2018/19 charge;
- (4) the Accommodation Support charge for Gretton Court for 2017-18 be reduced by £7.27 per week, being the staff element in this otherwise accommodation based charge, and instead £11.32 be charged for the move to the Intensive Housing Management Service in line with the other Sheltered Housing Schemes;

- (5) a working balance of £999,084 be budgeted for at 31 March 2018 based on a 1% rent decrease;
- (6) recommendation 2.5 of the report stating 'these estimates are approved subject to this committee's approval of the Housing repairs service & contract review report which is to be brought to an Ad Hoc meeting of this committee on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017, with delegated authority being given to the Head of Central Services in consultation with the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods to amend this working balance based on the full amount approved in that report' be disregarded.

(Councillor Posnett here entered the Committee meeting.)

#### C48. HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report providing a summary of some of the key issues and trends within the Borough in relation to homelessness and outlined the service developments that have been or are being made to prevent and alleviate homelessness.

The addition of an Appendix B table was handed to Members before this report.

The Welfare, Housing & Revenue Manager gave an overview of the report and brought Members' attention to:

- 3.1 Stating that it was recently highlighted nationally that Melton has a high number of 'Homeless' per head of population, although in reality we do have a large number of people presenting themselves as Homeless however the number of those we have an actual duty to find them accommodation is relatively low at 82 people in 2014 and 67 in 2015.
- 3.4- Noting that the most frequently cited reason for loss of the last settled home is now the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector which can be seen in Appendix A.
- 3.8-Noting the new welfare reforms announced over the last 18 months have had particularly marked consequences for families with more than two children and out of work young single people aged 18-21.
- 3.9-Noting that the new proposed Homelessness Reduction Bill currently going through Parliament makes changes to the current homelessness legislation. This places duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas.
- 3.10-noting the current threat of homelessness is defined as beginning at 28 days before person is likely to become homeless; the new bill would extend this to 56 days.
- 5.1- Noting that the decline of availability in the private rented sector to customers that approach for assistance has already seen some impact which raises concerns for Melton.
- 5.1- Financial and Other Resource Implications- Noting a forecast overspend prediction of £21k on homelessness.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods asked Members to consider these points and their comments raised on 5.3 as these would be beneficial to discuss further during exempt session later in this Committee.

A Member enquired as to how the overspend of 21k is being met. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods noted that they have been looking at existing budgets to help however some of this is out of their control.

A discussion was had in regard to homeless 18-25 years olds and the use of mist. It was noted by a member that MYST is always full however this does not address the needs of young people; they need more support especially for when they move on. Could the Council work with MYST to help provides support? This could help a lot of problems later on in their life. Another member noted that if Exempt item 11 was to fall, more help with supporting young people could be needed. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods noted that yes this will be looked at, adding that a lot of this is done through Me and My Learning.

A discussion took place regarding the statistics comparison between Melton and other boroughs as Melton follow a different process compared to others. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods noted that the Council are currently reviewing how we process homelessness applications as this is showing higher statistics to other Councils that's seem to be having informal discussions before filling out the applications.

A Member noted that 3.8 last paragraph has not been finished and enquired as to more clarification as next step is not clear. The Welfare, Housing & Revenue Manager stated that exempt report covers a lot of this section and therefore could not supply all information.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that they will need to develop personalised plans in response to the reduction bill.

The Chair sought a proposer and seconder for all recommendations. All Members were in favour.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) Members took note and understood the current homelessness position within Melton Borough;
- (2) Members took note and approved the Next Steps highlighted in sections 3.9-5.0;
- (3) Members took note on the comparable figures with Leicestershire Councils presented in Appendix A.

#### C49. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

## **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that the public be excluded during the consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Access to information: Exempt Information) under paragraph 3.

### C50. **PUBLIC CONVENIENCES BUSINESS CASE**

The Corporate Policy Officer submitted a report to approve the business case for the public conveniences replacement and also to approve the proposed method of disposal for Park Lane toilets. For Members to also note the work undertaken by the Public Conveniences Task Group.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendations be approved

### C51. **GRETTON COURT**

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented a draft Gretton Court feasibility report designed to ensure that Gretton Court remains fit for purpose as an Extra Care facility over the long term and for Members to approve the development of a robust financial and operation business case for Members consideration working in partnership with Leicestershire County Council.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendations be approved.

### C52. **HOUSING FOYER**

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented an update to Members on the Housing Foyer project and sought Members' direction on a way forward.

**RESOLVED** that recommendation 2.1 be approved and recommendation 2.2 be approved subject to further information being brought back to the March Committee.

The meeting which commenced at 6.30p.m and closed at 8.25p.m.

Chairman