

Minutes



Meeting name	Cabinet
Date	Wednesday, 6 March 2024
Start time	4.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

- Chair** Councillor P. Allnatt (Chair)
- Councillors** M. Glancy (Vice-Chair) S. Butcher
S. Cox P. Cumbers
- Observers** Councillor M. Brown, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
- Officers** Chief Executive
Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Director for Corporate Services
Director for Growth and Regeneration
Assistant Director for Governance and Democracy (Monitoring Officer)
Assistant Director for Housing Management
Legal Services Manager
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer

Minute No.	Minute
77	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE There were no apologies for absence.</p>
78	<p>MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024 were confirmed.</p>
79	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.</p>
80	<p>MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the following item had been referred from the Scrutiny Committee:</p> <p>Scrutiny feedback on the Housing Support Review The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Mike Brown, introduced the report advising Members that a Scrutiny Workshop was held on 14 February 2024 and considered a presentation on the Housing Support Review.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their feedback.</p> <p>Cabinet AGREED to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee’s feedback.</p>
81	<p>INTENSIVE HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE (HOUSING SUPPORT) REVIEW (In an alteration to the agenda, this item was considered after the item ‘matters referred from Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rules’.)</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services introduced the report and moved the recommendation. The Deputy Leader seconded the motion. It was explained that the report sets out the outcome from the Housing Support Review and recommendations for future housing support arrangements, within an independent living framework.</p> <p>The Director for Housing and Communities provided further explanation of the proposal and the process undertaken to get to this stage.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasing to see that via a review of the Housing Allocations Policy there would be scope to restrict the allocation of some properties to applicants with defined characteristics. • Cabinet recognised that it had taken a while to get to this point. • Officers were thanked for reviewing residents’ entitlement to housing benefit in order to mitigate the increase in costs. • The subsidised charges were welcomed.

- It was recognised that communal areas are important, particularly in terms of socialisation for residents.

Cabinet:

- 1) **NOTED** the outcome from the Intensive Housing Management (Housing Support) Review;
- 2) **APPROVED** the establishment of an Independent Living Framework to provide clarity on the Council's housing support arrangements and associated costs;
- 3) **DELEGATED** authority to the Director for Housing and Communities, in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services to make minor amendments to the Framework and to publish the final version on the Council's website and provide to tenants;
- 4) **APPROVED** that the Council's Intensive Housing Management Service will cease and be replaced by the arrangements set out in the report recommendations 2.5 and 2.6;
- 5) **APPROVED** the implementation of an Independent Living Support Service applied to properties designated as 'Sheltered Housing', as specified at section 5.15 of the report, and;
 - 5.1) **APPROVED** that the cost of delivering the Independent Living Support Service is met by an appropriate service charge, as set out at section 5.26 of the report;
 - 5.2) **APPROVED** that a 20% discount is implemented in 2024/25, as a contribution to elements of the service that are ineligible for housing benefit;
 - 5.3) **APPROVED** that a 10% discount is implemented in 2025/26, as a contribution to elements of the service that are ineligible for housing benefit;
 - 5.4) **APPROVED** that the full Independent Living Service Charge will be implemented from 2026/27;
 - 5.5) **APPROVED** the commencement of a four-week period of consultation on the proposed Independent Living Support Service for those tenants living within the specified properties;
 - 5.6) **DELEGATED** Authority to the Director for Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Director for Corporate Services, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property, Finance and Resources to consider feedback from the consultation, finalise and implement an Independent Living Support Service Charge and report back to Cabinet if required;
 - 5.7) **DELEGATED** authority to the Director for Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Director for Corporate Services and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services to create a one-off budget of up to £50,000 to enable improvements to communal areas of the

sheltered housing schemes in 2024/25, funded from the HRA Regeneration and Development reserve;

- 6) **APPROVED** the personalised exit and transitional plan, as set out in section 5.33 of the report for the remaining 'dispersed' Council properties that have historically been subject to an Intensive Housing Management charge, the outcome of which will be that each tenant will be directly supported to access alternative support and lifeline services relevant to their individual needs and preferences, and;
- 6.1) **APPROVED** the commencement of a four-week period of consultation on the proposed personalised exit and transitional plan arrangements for tenants in dispersed properties;
- 6.2) **DELEGATED** authority to the Director for Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Director for Corporate Services and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services, authority to consider feedback from the consultation, finalise and implement the exit and transitional plan arrangements and to report back to Cabinet if required.

Reasons for the Recommendations

The Council has taken action to review current practices and future service delivery options in relation to the provision of support to tenants through a review of the Intensive Housing Management Service. The review has now concluded and the recommendations within this report provide clarity on the proposed arrangements arising from this review.

The review has involved extensive work to fully understand the history, scope and delivery of the Intensive Housing Management Service and to consider future options that can best support tenants to retain their independence, respond to feedback about the service and to ensure that the Council can confidently deliver any future support arrangements.

Consultation and engagement has taken place with tenants as part of the review. Feedback has been taken into consideration and has enabled a greater understanding of the views of tenants, types of support required and how this can best be delivered and in doing so, to ensure clarity of expectations and accountability in service delivery.

The review has identified a lack of clarity on the Council's support offer and associated charging arrangements. The Independent Living Framework will help to address this by providing accurate and consistent information for tenants, prospective tenants, their families and for staff, stakeholders and elected members.

It is recommended that the Independent Living Support Service is only applied to specific 'in scope' properties. The rationale for the in-scope properties is set out in the report and includes traditionally sheltered housing properties and some bungalows adjacent to one of the sheltered housing schemes. The proposed service offer responds to feedback, aligns with expectations for what sheltered

housing is, and will have sufficient staffing resources to deliver an effective and high-quality service.

It is appropriate and necessary to charge for the proposed Independent Living Support Service and to apply it to all in-scope properties. However, a period of consultation on the specific proposals is required and feedback considered, before any new charges and service delivery arrangements can be finalised and implemented.

The Council has considered feedback in relation to the need to reduce cost pressures to tenants where possible. Based on the feedback received, it is proposed that the Independent Living Support Service charges will be phased over a two-year period, with discounts on elements of the charge that are not eligible for housing benefit (ineligible charges) being offered in 2024/25 and 2025/26. The full charge would apply in 2026/27. Additionally, the report confirms that each tenant subject to the Independent Living Support Service Charge would be supported directly with regards to benefit maximisation, to help tenants access financial support to which they are entitled.

The Council will need to ensure an upgrade of the lifeline system within the properties and communal areas to ensure it is digitally enabled and achieves value for money.

Feedback from tenants across the wider Intensive Housing Management Service (designated dispersed properties) was varied. Many tenants did not wish to have a chargeable support service at all, some only wanted to have access to a lifeline service, and some expressed a wish to have access to support. There has been considerable tenant frustration about the lack of clarity relating to the Intensive Housing Management Service. Tenants have been given the option to opt out of the service. A model based on visiting support service was developed but was not considered affordable to tenants. Through a managed exit plan, it is considered that the Council can better support tenants on a case-by-case basis to access the support / services relevant to their specific needs and preferences. Managing the exit arrangements will be resource intensive but is considered important and necessary. As part of the exit planning arrangements, the report confirms that tenants would be supported directly with regards to benefit maximisation, to help tenants access financial support to which they are entitled.

By no longer providing an Intensive Housing Management Service, the Council will also need to go through a process of 'de-designating' dispersed properties meaning that they form part of the council's general needs accommodation rather than restricted accommodation. There is scope, through a review of the Housing Allocations Policy and / or the use of a Local Lettings Policy (LLP), to restrict the allocation of some properties to applicants with defined characteristics, for example, those over a certain age or with health needs or disabilities. The Council will need to balance the requirement to support sustainable and balanced communities across the borough with tenant expectations and the council's

statutory obligations to assist and house those in greatest need via its housing register.

There is an existing delegation in place to enable the development of a Local Lettings Plan alongside this review. The Scrutiny Committee are also due to consider the allocations policy as part of their committee work programme, and it is suggested that this makes reference to any required amendments to the policy arising from this review.

The conclusion of the review and implementation of revised arrangements through an Independent Living Framework also responds to recommendations arising from an audit of the Intensive Housing Management Service.

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QUARTER 3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources introduced the report and moved the recommendations. The Leader seconded the motion. The purpose of the report was to provide a summary of the treasury activities to the end of December 2023 and cover the actual position to date on the Prudential Indicators, in accordance with the Prudential Code.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Officers for their hard work on managing the treasury management position of the Council.

Cabinet:

- 1) **NOTED** the Quarter 3 position on treasury activity for 2023/24;
- 2) **NOTED** the Quarter 3 position on Prudential Indicators for 2023/24.

Reasons for the Recommendations:

The Prudential Code requires the Council to monitor and report performance on Treasury Management activities at least quarterly. As a minimum full Council need to receive an annual report on the strategy and plan for the coming financial year, a mid year review and an annual report on performance of the treasury management function. In addition monitoring reports should be received at least quarterly alongside revenue and capital monitoring by the cabinet as the body delegated responsibility for treasury management functions.

To facilitate the decision making process and support capital investment decisions the Prudential Code requires the Council to agree and monitor a minimum number of prudential indicators.

83

RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment & Regulatory Services (Deputy Leader) introduced the report and moved the recommendations. The Leader seconded the motion.

The purpose of the report was to update Members on the risk management arrangements and outline the current significant risks that have been captured on the recent review of the Council's Strategic Risk Register by the Senior Leadership Team.

Cabinet **NOTED** the content of the report and the updated Strategic Risk Register and associated Risk Management Action Plan.

Reason for the Recommendation

Whilst Risk Management forms part of Audit and Standards terms of reference it is important that Cabinet have oversight and awareness of the strategic risks that could impact on the Council, to review the risk management arrangements in place and the activities that are being undertaken to mitigate those risks.

84

PLANNING GUIDANCE, CHILDREN'S HOMES

The Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services (Deputy Leader) introduced the report and moved the recommendations. The Leader seconded the motion.

The purpose of the report was to introduce a planning guidance document to support and guide applicants who are operating or considering operating Children's Homes within the Melton Borough.

The Director for Housing and Communities provided additional introduction and explained the challenges that are faced by the Council.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- None of the recommendations diminish the care and support that the Council wishes to offer.
- Members noted that the case which brought the issue to the Council's attention is unique and had no parallels with cases being dealt with by other Local Authorities.
- The Leader thanked the Parish Council where this has been a particular issue and stated that Ofsted have a responsibility that is why he intends to send a letter to them.
- Cabinet agreed that they are not against children's homes, just a concentration of homes in a particular area.

Cabinet:

- 1) **APPROVED** the 'Planning Guidance for Applicants' - Children's Homes document;
- 2) **DELEGATED** to the Director for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services authority to make minor amendments to the guidance as required;
- 3) **AGREED** that a proactive approach is taken to engage with local and national partners to increase awareness of the need for local context and community cohesion to be taken into consideration when considering the suitability of locations for children's homes in local communities;

- 4) **NOTED** that the Leader of the Council will be writing to Ofsted to express concern about their current approach and the absence of consideration regarding proportionality and concentration of children's homes in rural communities;
- 5) **REQUESTED** that the policy position is considered as part of the Local Plan Review process.

Reasons for Recommendations:

Approve the 'Planning Guidance for Applicants' - Children's Homes document at Appendix A.

Delegate to the Director for Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services, authority to make minor amendments to the guidance as required.

Agree that a proactive approach is taken to engage with local and national partners to increase awareness of the need for local context and community cohesion to be taken into consideration when considering the suitability of locations for children's homes in local communities.

Note that the Leader of the Council will be writing to Ofsted to express concern about their current approach and the absence of consideration regarding proportionality and concentration of children's homes in rural communities.

Requests that the policy position is considered as part of the Local Plan Review process.

The meeting closed at: 4.58 pm

Chair