

HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2020 commencing at 5.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Maskell (Chairman)

Cllr. Coleman (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Clack, Perry Cole, Coleman, G. Darrington, Griffiths, Harrison, Parkin and Piper

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Foster and Roy

Cllr. Dickins was also present.

41. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Health Advisory Committee held on 9 June 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

42. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

43. Actions from Previous Meetings

There were none.

44. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, advised the Committee that he had attended a number of health related meetings over recent weeks, including the West Kent Elected Members Forum, Health Liaison Board and the Kent County Council Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) which had heard a number of updates on services and the reports and minutes could be accessed via the [Kent County Council \(KCC\) website](#). He also advised that there were ongoing talks with MOAT and West Kent Housing on strategic progress and working relationships. He added that he was always available for any Members questions outside of the meeting.

45. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

46. Budget 2021/22: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 29 September 2020

Assessments (SCIAs)

The Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer - Finance & Trading, presented the report which set out updates to the 2021/22 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan. The report presented a growth item that had been identified which needed to be considered, and requested further suggestions from Members, before finalising the budget for 2021/22.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it was proposed that the Council continued to set a revenue budget that assumed no direct funding from Government through the Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. This would result in the Council continuing to be financially self-sufficient. To achieve this aim and to ensure a balanced budget position over the next 10-year period would be more challenging this year due to the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The budget process would be shorter with the Council's budget set at the November Council meeting instead of the February Council meeting. This should enable any changes to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2021 and minimise the period of uncertainty for staff.

The annual budget gap included in the report was £826,000 which was largely due to Covid-19. A growth proposal had been identified in the report for this Committee but Members were asked for their suggestions in order to contribute to reducing the budget gap, and their recommendations would be considered by Cabinet as part of the process to set a balanced 10-year budget. By addressing the issues this year, the Council would once again be in a strong financial position that other councils would aspire to.

There was a suggestion that charging for housing register referrals could be looked at, caveated with balancing relationships with local housing associations. Another suggestion was that the private sector housing management service could be used to bring in income but initially that might need to be an area of growth in order to achieve it.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) the growth proposal identified in Appendices F & G to the report (SCIA 20 (21/22) applicable to this Advisory Committee, be considered;
- b) consideration be given to asking Officers to explore the following further suggestions for growth and income
 - i) charging for housing register referrals; and
 - i) charging for the private sector management service.

47. Caravan Site Licensing Fees

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented the report which advised Members that with the introduction of the Mobile Homes Act 2013, the Council was now able to charge a fee to license residential caravan sites. Charging a fee would enable the Council to monitor site license compliance more effectively which would ensure residents' health and safety was better protected and the value of their homes safeguarded. The Council would then be able to take enforcement action where site owners were not managing and maintaining their sites and services adequately.

The report also outlined the background behind the Mobile Homes Act 2013, explained the types of sites that the fees could be applied to, how many relevant sites there were in the Sevenoaks district and the expected income if the recommendations were approved.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet to adopt

- a) the Fees Policy for Relevant Protected Sites as set out in the Appendix to the report, from 1 September 2020; and
- b) a charge for licensing fees for Relevant Protected Sites in accordance with the Mobile Homes Act 2013, to apply as from 1 September 2020.

48. The Future of the 'Sevenoaks Switch and Save' Scheme

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented the report which set out options for the future delivery of energy comparison services. This included continuing to provide the Sevenoaks Switch and Save Scheme or supporting residents in accessing other existing nationally recognised services, set out as Options A or B at paragraph 21 of the report.

Members debated the options before them, discussing the benefits of the current scheme and expressing some concern that those currently benefitting could be the least digitally literate and could therefore lose out. It was noted if Option B were adopted, promotional improvements would be required to ensure an increased use of national energy switching services seen in the present scheme.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 29 September 2020

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the preferred choice is Option B, to no longer fund or provide the Council's dedicated 'Sevenoaks Switch and Save' Scheme and instead promote existing nationally recognised energy switching comparison services and support local residents to access them at no cost to the Council.

49. Rough Sleepers Covid-19 Update report

The Head of Housing & Health presented the report which provided Members with an update on the homelessness work to place rough sleepers into accommodation as part of this Council's response to COVID19. The Council continued to support homelessness people at risk of rough sleeping in temporary accommodation, as part of this Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim was to support everyone in hotels, who wanted more permanent housing, to move-on and provide them with the required support to secure and succeed a tenancy moving forward.

Members received an informative [presentation](#) from the Head of Housing & Health, and the Advisory Committee expressed their gratitude to her and her team for all their hard and valuable work.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the work to place rough sleepers and those displaced by the pandemic into hotel accommodation as part of this Council's COVID-19 response, be noted.

50. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

The minutes were noted.

51. Work Plan

The work plan was noted, and it was agreed to move the 'Housing in Multiple Occupation' presentation to the meeting in February 2021 and also add to that meeting a progress report on the Housing Register and an update on the Housing Strategy.

A request was made that an 'Impact of Covid-19 on care homes' be added to the Health Liaison Board agenda.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 6.47 PM

CHAIRMAN