

HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2020 commencing at 3.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Maskell (Chairman)

Cllr. Coleman (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Clack, G. Darrington, Foster, Griffiths, Harrison, Osborne-Jackson and Roy

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Perry Cole and Piper

Cllrs. Dyball and Parkin were also present.

30. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Health Advisory Committee held on 26 November 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

32. Actions from Previous Meetings

The action was noted. The Housing Policy Manager advised that due to the pandemic a visit would now take place later in the year.

33. Update from Portfolio Holder

A Portfolio update would be given to the next meeting.

34. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

35. West Kent Housing Association Presentation

The Chairman welcomed Tracy Allinson West Kent Housing Association's Chief Executive (WKHA) and Cathy McCarthy, Housing Director WKHA, to the meeting. Members received a presentation from them highlighting their vision, updates to their strategic plan and the importance of partnership working going forward. Members welcomed the messages within the presentation and took the opportunity

to ask questions which included concern about the condition of empty properties and lettings.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

36. Housing Options - Voluntary Housing Relocation Schemes

The Head of Housing and Health presented the report which sought Members' approval of pursuing the opportunity to work with organisations offering voluntary housing relocation schemes. The scheme could be added to the range of housing options for suitable customers at risk of homelessness, which would help to reduce the pressure on temporary accommodation and affordable housing locally. The Chief Officer People and Places was able to offer her own experience of the relocation scheme and how it was working elsewhere in the County, and Members were reassured of the hand-holding service offered on any relocation scheme. It was made clear that it did not prevent a customer returning to the District and receiving housing advice and support.

A concern was expressed that this should only be offered as a voluntary option and that suitable customers should not feel obliged to choose it. The Head of Housing and Health advised that it was not a quick option and could be investigated in tandem with other housing options, it was merely an opportunity should a customer wish to make a fresh start and the Council would help them to explore it. Members would receive feedback on its operation, and any scheme closely monitored.

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 the Council work with voluntary housing relocation schemes in other locations.

37. Draft Tenancy Statement (2020)

The Housing Policy Manager presented the report which set out the changes to the draft document following a recent review in line with the District Council's Housing Strategy. Recommendations broadly followed those of the previous document with additions to cover pet-friendly policies, Community Land Trusts (CLT) and Quercus Housing.

It was noted that these were recommendations only and there was no legal requirement for social housing providers to adhere to them. However, there was evidence that they were broadly followed and they were also beneficial in enhancing the District Council's partnership working with local Registered Providers. Key social housing providers had been consulted with no objections raised.

Members raised some issues regarding the pet-friendly policies and the potential to alienate residents already in a tenancy, which was counter balanced with the need

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to be able to downsize an older resident with a pet. It was considered that this should be something looked at by Providers' on a case by case basis.

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 the Draft Tenancy Statement 2020 be adopted as District Council policy, with a proviso that the pet-friendly scheme be exercised with appropriate controls.

38. Review of Homelessness Out of Hours Service

The Head of Housing & Health presented the report which updated Members on the current pilot, with Centra, to provide the Council's homelessness out of hours service.

The pilot with Centra had commenced on 17 October 2019 initially as 6 months, but which had been extended for a further two months with a review due on 17 April 2020. However, as a result of the response to Covid-19, which has placed additional pressures on the housing advice service, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Health, it was agreed to allow the pilot to be extended for a full year period to 16 October 2020.

As part of the pilot, the Head of Housing and Health had met regularly with Centra and monitored performance and any concerns.

The report also set out customer feedback received, and based on this to date, officers were satisfied that the Council and its customers were receiving a good-value, efficient service from Centra during the pilot period. A final 12-month review of the pilot would be presented to the Housing and Health Advisory Committee and Cabinet in September and October 2020 respectively, to decide on the way forward.

The Chairman advised that it would be worth identifying other options/providers as part of the full review, in case the pilot did not go as well as hoped and an alternative was required. He also advised that he was aware that Councillor Osborne-Jackson would like to be part of supporting the Committee's oversight of how the project was developed over the next four months, working alongside the Portfolio Holder.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the customer feedback supplied to date, regarding the pilot with Centra to provide the Council's homelessness Out-Of-Hours service, be noted.

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39. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

The minutes were noted.

40. Work Plan

The work plan was noted. An update on the COVID 19 recovery response for rough sleepers was added to the work plan for the next meeting along with an update from West Kent Housing in February 2021.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 5.12 PM

CHAIRMAN