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22 August 2017

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

A meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group will be held in the Pink Room at the Arun Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton, BN17 5LF on **Thursday, 7 September 2017 at 6.00 pm** and you are requested to attend.

Members: Councillors; Hughes (Chairman), Mrs Porter (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Ayres, Bicknell, Blampied, Edwards, Mrs Harrison-Horn, Purchase, Mrs Rapnik and Miss Rhodes.

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Please send your apologies to Erica Keegan – tel: 01903 737547 or e-mail: committees@arun.gov.uk

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and Officers are reminded to make any declaration of personal and/or prejudicial/pecuniary interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda.

You should declare your interest by stating:

- a) the item you have the interest in
- b) whether it is a personal interest and the nature of the interest
- c) whether it is also a prejudicial/pecuniary interest

You then need to re-declare your interest and the nature of the interest at the commencement of the item or when the interest becomes apparent

3. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group held on 6 July 2017 (as previously circulated).

4. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. UPDATE ON HOUSING FIRE SAFETY

The Head of Housing will provide the Working Group with a further verbal update.

6. *MOBILITY SCOOTER STORAGE CHARGES

This report provides a brief overview with regard to the recent introduction of charges for mobility scooter storage.

7. *STOCK CONDITION REPORT

This report provides a brief overview with regard to the work on the Housing Stock Condition Survey.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

To set and review the work programme for 2017/18 (attached).

(Note: *Indicates report is attached for Members of the Working Group and Cabinet only and the Press (excluding exempt items). Copies of reports can be viewed on the Council's web site at www.arun.gov.uk or can be obtained on request from the Committee Manager.)

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

6 July 2017 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Hughes (Chairman), Mrs Porter (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Ayres, Blampied, Edwards, Mrs Harrison-Horn, Purchase, Mrs Rapnik and Miss Rhodes.

[Note: Councillor Purchase was absent from the meeting during the consideration of matters referred in Minute 6 [Part]].

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer has advised Members of interim arrangements to follow when making declarations of interest. They have been advised that for the reasons explained below, they should make their declarations on the same basis as the former Code of Conduct using the descriptions of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Reasons

- The Council has adopted the government’s example for a new local code of conduct, but new policies and procedures relating to the new local code are yet to be considered and adopted.
- Members have not yet been trained on the provisions of the new local code of conduct.
- The definition of Pecuniary Interests is narrower than the definition of Prejudicial Interests, so by declaring a matter as a Prejudicial Interest, that will cover the requirement to declare a Pecuniary Interest in the same matter.

Where a Member declares a “Prejudicial Interest” this will, in the interest of clarity for the public, be recorded in the Minutes as a Prejudicial and Pecuniary Interest.

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Service Working Group held on 23 March 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

3. START TIMES

The Working Group

RESOLVED

That its start times for meetings during 2017/2018 be 6.00 pm.

4. UPDATE ON HOUSING FIRE SAFETY

In light of the recent and horrendous fire disaster at Grenfell Tower in London, the Working Group received a verbal update from the Head of Housing outlining the action that the Council was taking in response with its social housing.

The first point made was that the Council did not have any Council housing that could be categorised as ‘high rise’. This had been classified by the Department of Community and Local Government (DCLG) as being over six floors high. Secondly, it was confirmed that the Council had no buildings which had any form of aluminium cladding. The Council had, however, taken this incident as an opportunity for it to ensure the safety of its tenants and leaseholders.

The Head of Housing then informed Members of the action that the Council had taken – in summary this was:

- Checking blocks of flats which had been clad to ensure correct insulation and that there were fire breaks between the floors of flats
- That the materials used for cladding met current fire safety and building regulations. Initial findings confirmed that the materials had been fitted correctly.
- Letters had been hand delivered to all tenants and leaseholders who lived in properties that had been clad, including houses. This had set out the steps that the Council was taking to assess the cladding and to identify any action, if required.
- Flats had been inspected and front doors that were not believed to be fire doors had been identified.
- Leaseholders had been asked to provide evidence of fire door compliance by no later than 31 July 2017. Any door found to be non-compliant would need to be replaced by the Leaseholder and in the event that this was not replaced, then the Council would take steps to undertake the installation and then recharge the leaseholder.
- Risk assessments had been undertaken on a number of blocks of flats and to date no significant issues had been found.
- The Council, along with other West Sussex District and Borough Councils, had recently attended a meeting with West Sussex

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

Fire Brigade in which information on appropriate fire safety had been shared.

- It was outlined that the fire service had already carried out 53 requested inspections of high rise buildings across the County. Work on non-residential high rise buildings would follow
- A meeting to review the provision of various information relating to private sector housing; building control; and planning and housing was due to be led by the Director of Services. This information would then be fed back to West Sussex Fire Brigade.
- Council housing staff had been written to, to ask that when they were not on site, steps needed to be taken to ensure that corridors and stairways in flats remained free from obstruction and rubbish.
- There were still a number of issues that the Council wanted to investigate further. One was whether the Council had an obligation to fit fire alarms into two storey flats.

The Head of Housing stated that this was clearly an ongoing issue and that it was anticipated that further matters relating to fire safety would be identified locally or nationally and that details would be brought back to Members in due course.

In discussing the update provided, the Working Group confirmed that it was pleased to know that the Council had and was continuing to take fire safety very seriously. It was reassuring to hear that the Council had used the correct installers and equipment to make sure that the fire safety regime was constantly in line with current regulations. Some questions were asked about risk assessments and how often these were reviewed. The Head of Housing confirmed that he would check if there was a review pattern that the Council needed to be following and how frequently to date the Council checked risk assessments. He outlined that consideration was being given as whether fire assessments should be put on-line. Although there was no statutory requirement to review of them annually, it was his view that this would provide an added comfort for residents.

Other Councillors stated that it was positive to hear that the Council was working so closely with the Fire Brigade in terms of the safety of its buildings. A question was asked as to whether there were plans to look at privately owned high rise buildings such as Kingley Gate in Littlehampton and whether freehold residents had the correct fire alarm systems in place for each building. Members were interested to learn what publicity or communication had been undertaken by the Council, if any, with the residents of these properties as well as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to ensure their compliance with regulations. The Head of Housing outlined that the Fire Brigade was taking on this role and to date had checked 53 high rise buildings across the County. This was also an issue that the Council would be discussing with other Councils and taking up with the Fire Brigade so that the Council could learn best practice and what was happening elsewhere.

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The Working Group in thanking the Head of Housing for his update noted the contents that they had been supplied with.

5. FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT GRANT

The Head of Housing introduced this report which set out the ways that the new Flexible Homeless Support Grant would be used by the Council to prevent homelessness and to sustain tenancies.

Members were reminded that at the last meeting of the Working Group, they had received a report briefing them about this Grant that the Council would be receiving in place of the Temporary Accommodation Management Fee and in terms of the allocation of funding for Arun. The report before Members this evening was asking the Working Group to confirm how the Grant should be best used within the Council to meet local homelessness demand.

In discussing this item, the Working Group agreed that this was exciting news and that the grant would massively assist the Council in being able to continue to assist vulnerable people. It was explained that the grant needed to be used in four ways – these being:

- Staffing resources to focus on prevention, tenancy sustainment and sourcing alternative accommodation, through a keyworker model;
- Financial remedies to prevent or relieve individual cases of homelessness;
- Contribution to partnership initiatives in homelessness prevention or in achieving accommodation solutions; and
- The purchase of specialist software to record prevention data specifically for the purpose of reporting on the new Performance Indicators returns to the DCLG.

Members were reassured to hear that the Council was working with external partners to ensure that it did all it could to enable people to remain where they were living. On software, the question was asked if this would provide a better way of managing homelessness. The Housing Services Manager outlined that the Council had not yet seen the software that would be made available but could outline that this would be specific software built around homelessness which would assist in data gathering which was not as in-depth as the Council would like. The Council was therefore taking part in a trial and as part of this was asking for more information about clients and outcomes. This new software would provide the technology to allow the Council to do this.

The role of the homelessness intervention keyworker was supported and it was hoped that in the long-term this would end up saving the Council money. It was recognised that prevention was a big issue and problem to overcome as many people on benefits struggled to find suitable accommodation in the private sector with many landlords not accepting them as tenants or would not

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

accept rent bonds. The Housing Services Manager explained how the intervention of the keyworker would assist with this problem.

Following some further discussion, the Working Group

RECOMMEND TO CABINET

That the proposed initiatives and expenditure of the Flexible Support Grant, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

6. BED AND BREAKFAST PAYMENTS – BUDGET INCREASE FOR 2017/18

The Working Group received a report from the Head of Housing which sought approval for the Bed and Breakfast Budget for 2017/18 to be increased to better reflect demand.

Members were reminded that on 19 June 2017, Cabinet had considered a report on tackling homelessness and as part of those recommendations it had been identified that the Working Group should receive a report regarding an increase in budget for Bed and Breakfast for 2017/18. At the same time that that report was approved, details regarding the first two months expenditure would have been available which could provide some clarity in terms of the possible outturn for 2017/18.

As identified in the report to Cabinet, the increase in homelessness was continuing to grow at a District, County and National level. The reasons for this were many and varied, some of which had been discussed as part of the previous agenda item. Although the Council continued to provide a range of assistance to those who were homeless or were about to be made homeless, the Council was continuing to spend significant sums on the provision of Bed & Breakfast accommodation. It was outlined that in 2016/17 a total of £440,000 was spent on Bed and Breakfast and that financial provision for Bed & Breakfast for 2017/18 had been set at £360,000. It was clear that the budget allocated was insufficient as expenditure at April 2017 had been £30,000 and £50,000 for May. It was too soon to be able to confirm the spend for June 2017. Based on these trends, it was proposed that the Bed & Breakfast budget for 2017/18 be increased to £550,000.

As this recommendation was wholeheartedly supported by the Working Group, it then

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL

That an increase in the Bed & Breakfast Budget for 2017/18 from £360,000 to £550,000 in approved.

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7. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The Working Group received and noted its Work Programme for 2017/18.

(The meeting concluded at 6.48 pm)

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP – 7 SEPTEMBER 2017

Information Paper

Subject : Mobility Scooter Storage Charges

Report By : Karen McGreal – Housing Business Improvement & Policy Manager

Report Date : August 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a brief overview with regard to the recent introduction of charges for mobility scooter storage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Housing and Customer Services Group are recommended to note the report.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2015-2025 sets out how the Council intends to manage, maintain and invest in its housing and deliver services to its tenants and leaseholders.
- 1.2 If the Council is to achieve its objectives it is critical that it puts procedures in place to maximise income and make best use of HRA resources.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide a brief summary to the introduction of charges for customers storing mobility scooters in Arun District Council storage facilities.

2.0 Previous Scooter Storage Arrangements

- 2.1 Historically Arun District Council has provided a variety of arrangements for the storage of mobility scooters at sixteen of our sheltered housing schemes across the district.
- 2.2 These mobility storage provisions take the form of brick built garages, purpose built scooter stores and a variety of wooden sheds. These vary across the schemes depending on when the provision was installed.
- 2.3 Historically, we have provided the storage area and access to an electrical plug socket to charge the scooter without making a direct charge to the end user.

- 2.4 Depending on the provision of the electricity supply, historically the costs for the electricity were either shared amongst all residents as part of the communal electrical costs or paid by the housing revenue account as part of the landlords supply charges.
- 2.5 Spaces available were taken on an ad hoc basis, first come, first served.
- 2.6 There are one hundred and two mobility scooter charging points. The largest grouping is at Bersted Green Court with eighteen and Wickbourne House is the smallest with space for one mobility scooter. Most schemes have between three and eight scooter spaces.

3.0 New Mobility Scooter Charging Arrangements

- 3.1 Due to the various types of mobility scooter storage provision and varying electricity supply arrangements across the schemes it was not possible to meter and measure the cost of the mobility scooter charging on an individual usage basis.
- 3.2 We decided to apply a flat rate charge for the provision of storage facilities and electricity supply within.
- 3.3 The charges are set at £3.50 per week, reduced from an initial calculation of £4.00 following consultation with residents.
- 3.4 The charges consist of £1.12 electricity, £1.80 administrative costs (including managing the waiting list, billing and account management) and £0.58 value added tax.
- 3.5 The charges equate to 50p day for safe and secure storage and charging of mobility scooters.
- 3.5 Charging commenced Monday 3rd July 2017 alongside a new mobility scooter storage policy.

4.0 Tenant Feedback and Take Up

- 4.1 Following the introduction of the charges we have had three tenants give up their mobility scooters.
- 4.2 We had two enquiries querying the charges and following an explanation both tenants have signed the agreement and taken up a mobility scooter charging space.
- 4.3 We have had seven enquiries from individuals asking to take up mobility scooter spaces following the introduction of charges. These applicants have either been allocated a space or joined a waiting list for the location of their choice.

4.4 We are only one month into the charging scheme and we currently have an occupancy rate of 41%. The overwhelming response has been very positive.

5.0 The Future

5.1 For the first time we now have a programme of planned works to bring the mobility storage scooters up to a safe and consistent standard across the locations.

5.2 Woking Court has been the pilot for the new design (photo's attached). This design is low maintenance, represents value for money and represents the standard. We will aim to replicate across our sites in future years.

5.3 We have introduced a waiting list for charging spaces, helping us to identify demand and, for the first time, a licence agreement where scooter owners commit to regular safety checks and insurance on their mobility scooters.

5.4 Albeit relatively small numbers (<£20k per year) we have successfully introduced a new revenue stream via this project.

5.5 The project is the first of many areas where we will consider how we charge for services our customers receive.

5.6 Our customers were overwhelmingly positive, supportive and understanding of the reasoning behind the need to charge for the storage of mobility scooters.

Background Papers: None

Contact: Karen McGreal – Housing Business Improvement & Policy Manager
Extension 37824





AGENDA ITEM NO.7ARUN DISTRICT COUNCILHOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP – 7 September 2017

Subject : Stock Condition Survey

Report by : Brian Pople, Head of Housing

Report date: August 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a brief overview with regard to the work on the Housing Stock Condition Survey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Housing & Customer Services working Group are asked to note the report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION1.1

Following discussion with the Cabinet Member for Residential Services during May 2016, it was concluded that it would be appropriate for a Stock Condition Survey to be undertaken on all housing stock. The information obtained from the survey would be incorporated into the new Housing I.T. system and more importantly could be used for programming housing maintenance work including details of costs. As it had been identified that a new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan would be prepared for 2017 and survey work was felt to be important in terms of budgeting.

1.2

It was agreed that the Stock Condition Survey would be carried out on 100% of Housing Stock (3343 at that time) and when possible leaseholders properties (463) would also be included, if they agreed.

1.3

Detailed discussions then took place to agree the basis of the stock condition surveys and contract documentation was drawn up. Detail that was to be covered included:

- The objective of 100% of survey being carried out on all housing properties
- General description/location of the Housing and Leasehold stock
- Details of individual components against each property including their condition
- Unit cost of components based on current prices

Shown separately is a table identifying the items to be surveyed.

1.4

Following a tendering process in which interest was shown by eleven suppliers, a short list of four was drawn up, based on them being the lowest cost bids. Housing then carried out a further evaluation based on price and quality, with the successful contractor identified and the contract awarded in December 2016.

1.5

Because of the importance of the survey work, it was decided to carry out a pilot exercise on a selection of void properties and then evaluate the surveys. As a result of the work and subsequent evaluations, further adjustments have since been made to the survey.

2.0 NEXT STEPS

2.1

Since work began on the surveys in March 2017, more than 700 have been completed. These surveys include general housing stock and sheltered schemes. The programme of surveys is planned to take two years and should be complete by March 2017.

2.2

In recognition of the fact that, the surveys will bring to light the need for more planned maintenance, the new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, which is to be approved by Full Council on 13 September 2017, reflects an increase in budget of £400,000 for Housing Planned maintenance in 2018/19. It is anticipated that such increased investment may need to continue in later years.

2.3

It is proposed that a further update on progress with the Stock Condition Survey is brought back to the Housing & Customer Services Working Group in a year's time.

Contact: Brian Pople, Head of Housing, Ext. 37718

Housing & Customer Services Meeting							
Meeting Date			06-Jul-17	07-Sep-17	02-Nov-17	04-Jan-18	01-Mar-18
Item	Lead	Origin					
Terms of Reference		ToR	*				
Work programme - set and review		ToR	*				
Flexible Homeless Support Grant	JK		*				
Update on Housing Fire Safety (Verbal Update)	BP		*				
Bed & Breakfast Payments	BP		*				
Stock Condition Report	SK			*			
Mobility Scooter Storage & Fees - Information Report	KM			*			
Update on Housing Fire Safety	SK			*			
HRA Business Plan Work Programme	SK				*		
Fire Safety in Communal Areas Policy	JK				*		
Customer Services Annual Update Report	JRW				*		
Stonepillow Update	SK					*	
Housing Fraud Update	JM					*	
Empty Homes Strategy	LC					*	
Agenda Prep Timetable							
Send to Gemma for CMT by 2pm Thurs			01-Jun-17	03-Aug-17	28-Sep-17	30-Nov-17	25-Jan-18
CMT Tues			06-Jun-17	08-Aug-17	03-Oct-17	05-Dec-17	30-Jan-18
Draft Reports to Committees by 11am Thurs			08-Jun-17	10-Aug-17	05-Oct-17	07-Dec-17	01-Feb-18
Agenda Prep Date 15:00			14-Jun-17	16-Aug-17	11-Oct-17	13-Dec-17	07-Feb-18
Room			Ash	CR2	CR2	Ash	CR2
Final Reports to Committees by 11am Mon			20-Jun-17	22-Aug-17	17-Oct-17	19-Dec-17	13-Feb-18
Despatch Agendas by 2pm Thurs			22-Jun-17	24-Aug-17	19-Oct-17	21-Dec-17	15-Feb-18
Date of Meeting 6pm			06-Jul-17	07-Sep-17	02-Nov-17	04-Jan-18	01-Mar-18
Room			CR1	CR1	CR1	CR1	CR1
OSC Meeting Dates			25-Jul-17	26-Sep-17	21-Nov-17	23-Jan-18	20-Mar-18
Cabinet Meeting Dates			17-Jul-17	18-Sep-17	13-Nov-17	15-Jan-18	12-Mar-18
Full Council Meeting Dates			12-Jul-17	13-Sep-17	08-Nov-17	10-Jan-18	07-Mar-18