

'Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting'

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

2 November 2017 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Hughes (Chairman), Mrs Porter (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Ayres, Blampied [from Minute 16 to Minute 19], Mrs Rapnik and Miss Rhodes.

16. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors; Bence as Cabinet Member for Residential Services, Bicknell, Mrs Harrison-Horn and Purchase.

17. 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.

18. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Service Working Group held on 7 September 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

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19. FIRE SAFETY IN COMMUNAL AREAS POLICY

The Housing and Customer Services Working Group received a report from the Housing Services Manager that set out a Policy for the management of the communal parts of Council Housing areas, with particular regard to Fire Safety.

It was explained that as part of the Council’s response to the Grenfell Tower fire, consideration had been given to health and safety provisions in the communal areas of the Council’s housing, particularly internal corridors and stairwells. It was noted that Arun District Council managed a number of communal areas within low rise and medium rise blocks of flats; Sheltered Housing Schemes, communal garden areas and outside spaces. It was confirmed that the Council did not own any blocks of flats that were taller than 4 storeys high.

The Policy was intended to set out the Council’s approach to communal areas in order to give clarity for residents and set procedures for staff with the aim of ensuring all internal and external communal areas would be kept free from obstruction or hazards to protect the health and safety of residents and other users of Council Housing properties. The Policy outlined ways to keep communal areas accessible and tidy in order to avoid fire hazards and to give a clear, safe exit in the event of a fire.

It was noted that the Communal Areas Policy would be implemented with a phased approach and would allow the council the option of enforcement action, as a last resort, should residents not comply. The Housing Services Manager informed Members that training would be given to all Housing staff that had reason to visit the Council’s housing so that they were equipped to address any safety issues within the communal areas. This would help ensure a frequent rate of inspection.

Following questions that were responded to at the meeting the Chairman referred Members to the report’s recommendation and this was agreed.

The Housing and Customer Services Working Group

RECOMMEND TO CABINET

that the Communal Areas Policy be adopted.

20. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN WORK PROGRAMME

The Group Head of Residential Services provided a verbal update on the HRA Business Plan and Work Programme.

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Members were informed that there were three main priorities, as follows:

- Increasing Housing Stock
- Housing Assets being Fit for Purpose
- Maximising Income and making best use of available resources

In order to achieve these priorities it was explained that the Council would aim to:

- acquire 25 new homes annually to add to the Council’s housing stock;
- undertake a Council Housing stock condition survey that would inform the Council’s capital maintenance programme from 2019/20; and
- make best use of resources to ensure income maximisation.

Members were informed that a detailed action plan would be developed and brought back to the Housing & Customer Services Working Group in early Spring 2018.

Following questions that were responded to at the meeting the Chairman thanked the Group Head of Residential Services for this update and closed the meeting.

(The meeting concluded at 6.27pm)