

RESIDENTIAL AND WELLBEING SERVICES COMMITTEE

3 June 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Pendleton (Chair), Gregory (Vice-Chair), Catterson, Mrs Cooper, Daniells, Mrs English, Hamilton, Hughes, Needs and Yeates

Councillors Bicknell, Brooks, Cooper, Coster, Edwards and Roberts were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

44. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members of the Committee, the Public and Press, other Members and Officers participating in the first meeting of the Residential and Wellbeing Services Committee under the newly adopted Committee structure.

The Chair explained that this meeting was being held in accordance with the resolution of the Extraordinary Council held on 12 May 2021 [Minute 551] which continued Section 5 Part 5 of the Constitution (The Virtual Meeting Procedure Rules) and declared the use of Council powers, under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, and the general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, for making advisory decisions, as appropriate.

45. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

The Chair confirmed that she had altered the running order of the published agenda and would be taking items from the final meeting of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group first, followed by items that needed a decision and finally items to be noted, and therefore that the new running order would be as follows [published agenda item numbers in brackets]:

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Housing & Customer Services Working Group - 16 March 2021 [item 9]
4. Urgent Items [item 3]
5. Public Question Time [item 4]
6. Start Times [item 5]
7. Committee Terms of Reference [item 6]
8. Payment to Angmering Community Land Trust from Commuted Sums for Affordable Housing Schemes [item 8]
9. Grant Funded Homelessness Expenditure [item 7]
10. Outside Bodies
11. Work Programme [item 10]

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

47. HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP - 16 MARCH 2021

The Chair presented the Minutes from the meeting of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group held on 16 March 2021 to the Committee to approve a series of recommendations at Minute 26 [Repairs Handbook], Minute 27 [Income Recovery Policy], Minute 28 [Anti-Social Behaviour Policy] and Minute 29 [Decant Policy].

The Chair introduced the Repairs Handbook [Minute 26] and then invited questions. One Member spoke in praise of the handbook but raised concerns about elements of it that had the potential to become issues later on like responsibility for fence lines. Another Member commented positively on the handbook's clarity but questioned the absence of information for tenants on how to handle housing issue disputes with the Council. This Member also asked if the handbook would be available in other formats and other languages as there were many tenants in the district's social housing for whom English was a second language.

The Business Improvement Manager responded to queries confirming that the Council would identify property boundaries but not provide fencing as tenants may understand it, that the handbook could be provided in other languages which would be determined at the sign-up point and that hard copies would be given to new tenants with an electronic version also being available on the website. She confirmed disputes would usually be handled via the Complaints procedure and that tenants could seek third party advice under Right to Repair legislation.

One non-Committee Member asked whether tenants would be allowed to put up their own fencing if this was not provided by the Council. The Business Improvement Manager confirmed that tenants would be allowed to erect fencing with permission from the Council to ensure it was in line with regulations.

Following the discussion, the recommendations were proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Tenants Repair Handbook be adopted; and
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Residential Services to approve changes to the handbook

The Chair introduced the Income Recovery Policy [Minute 27] and then the recommendations were proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Income Policy 2021 be adopted; and
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Residential Services to make changes to the Policy.

The Chair introduced the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy [Minute 28] and then invited questions. One Member flagged a typographical error on page 5 in 3.1 item m). The Director of Services confirmed that if the recommendations were approved, Officers would have delegated authority to correct this. The recommendations were then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy 2021 be adopted; and
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Residential Services to make changes to the Policy

The Chair introduced the Decant Policy [Minute 29] and then invited questions. One Member raised the issue of vulnerable tenants who were not being allowed to decant by the Council and whether there was an opportunity to appeal this decision. The Neighbourhood Services Manager explained that the policy covered situations where extensive work was needed and when it was deemed to be unsafe for the resident to remain in situ during this, and that tenants could make requests to the Council to be considered on these grounds. She clarified that should a request be declined after inspection, that tenants could have decisions reviewed via the Complaints procedure. She further confirmed that all decanted tenants, including vulnerable ones, had a named Officer to provide a consistent service and were supported with many aspects of the process (removals, disconnecting/reconnecting utilities etc) so that they were not disadvantaged.

The Vice-Chair congratulated staff on the huge amount of work that had been necessary to prepare these reports and the handbook. The Chair added her congratulations to the team for putting together this complex and very detailed work.

The recommendations were then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Decant Policy 2021 be adopted; and
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Residential Services to make changes to the Policy.

48. 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

The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent items.

49. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that there had been no questions from the public submitted for this meeting.

50. START TIMES

It was proposed and seconded that the remaining Residential and Wellbeing Services Committee meetings for 2021/22 continue to start at 18:00pm.

The Committee

RESOLVED

that the start time of all remaining meetings of the Committee for 2021/22 would be 18:00pm.

51. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chair invited the Interim Monitoring Officer to present his report. The Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the Committee's new Terms of Reference as defined by Full Council, drawing Members' attention to the 2 appendices which listed Officer delegated functions and matters reserved. He went on to explain the recommendations as set out in the report.

One Member confirmed that the next Constitution Working Party was on 28 June 2021. Another Member raised concerns over Officer authority limits in Appendix 2 but that these were being dealt with outside of the Committee.

The recommendations were then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) the general terms of reference for committees in Part 3 paragraph 3 of the Constitution and further the specific terms of reference of this Residential and Wellbeing Services Committee as established by Full Council on 19 May 2021 as set out in part 1 and Part 2 of Appendix 1 (attached) be noted
- 2) suggestion be made to Full Council through the Constitution Working Party for clarifications of these terms of reference
- 3) the schedule of Residential and Wellbeing Services Committee meetings as set out in the Calendar of meetings (attached) be noted
- 4) the matters reserved scheme whereby matters not reserved by committee to itself are delegated to Officers by default as set out in Appendix 2 (attached) be agreed

52. PAYMENT TO ANGMERING COMMUNITY LAND TRUST FROM COMMUTED SUMS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEMES

The Chair invited the Director of Services and the Interim Group Head for Corporate Support to present this report. The Director of Services explained that the report assigned a commuted sum payment to Angmering Community Land Trust to enable the development of 12 affordable homes in Angmering. The Interim Group Head for Corporate Support confirmed that the Committee had to approve this payment in line with the Constitution.

One Member spoke about the benefits of the scheme including that the houses could not be sold under the Right to Buy and would be available continually for the residents of Angmering. Non-Committee Members spoke in favour of this item, thanking Officers for all the work involved, and how this could be a flagship way forward for similar schemes and other authorities.

The recommendation was then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED

that it approve a commuted sum payment of £582,531.96 received from the development at Mayflower Way North (A/46/19/PL) to Angmering Community Land Trust to enable the Trust to develop 12 x affordable homes at Mayflower Way (A/219/17/PL) in accordance with the terms of the Collaboration Agreement.

53. GRANT FUNDED HOMELESSNESS EXPENDITURE

The Chair introduced this item and explained one change to the recommendations as published in the agenda pack, in that the wording 'and approve' would be removed from the second recommendation.

One Member spoke in support of the initiatives to help homelessness from occurring and the support these grants would provide to the Council's partners Turning Tides and Stonepillow. Another Member spoke about the responsibility the Council had to its homeless residents and its role in presenting them with opportunities that these grants could further support.

It was confirmed that the Committee would be kept informed as and when these sources of funding became available.

After discussion, the Chair formally noted the report and its recommendations which were as follows

- 1) Note expenditure for the Homelessness Prevention Grant 2020/2021;
- 2) Note expenditure for the rough sleeping initiative funding rounds three (2020/21) and four (2021/22); and
- 3) Note the balance in earmarked reserve for homelessness and rough sleeping initiatives.

54. OUTSIDE BODIES

The Chair confirmed that there were a number of outside bodies that would report into this Committee but that there was nothing to be reported to this meeting.

55. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair invited the Director of Services to present the Work Programme. The Director of Services explained that Officers had put together initial items that they knew would need to be brought to the Committee and this was what was set out in the agenda pack. She confirmed it was a first iteration of the Work Programme and that Officers would work with the Chair and Vice-Chair to explore future items that needed to come forward for operational reasons or items requested by the Committee.

The Chair confirmed there were a number of items that she would be discussing with Officers in terms of the Work Programme. She urged Committee members that if they had any particular areas of interest or concern to get in touch with her and that she could then explore these issues with Officers.

One Member suggested that the annual Precept meeting of the Police and Crime Panel be included on the Work Programme so that the Committee representative could vote at that meeting in accordance with the wishes of the Committee. The Chair agreed that this should be added to the meeting on 24 January 2022.

The Group Head of Community Wellbeing asked that the West Sussex County Council Information and Advice Contract be brought forward to the next meeting of the Committee. The Chair confirmed she would discuss this with the Director of Services.

Upon request from a Member, the Director of Services clarified that the 'SAP Report' stood for 'Safer Arun Partnership Report', the 'LCN Update' stood for the 'Local Community Network Update' and the 'HRA Update' stood for the 'Housing Revenue Account Update'. She also confirmed that acronyms would be avoided in future iterations of the Work Programme.

After discussion, the Chair formally noted the Work Programme.

(The meeting concluded at 6.51 pm)