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Subject to approval at the next Housing and Wellbeing Committee meeting

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HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

2 December 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Pendleton (Chair), Gregory (Vice-Chair), Mrs Cooper, Daniells, Mrs English, Hamilton, Hughes, Madeley (Substitute for Rhodes) and Stanley (Substitute for Yeates)

485. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence had been received from Councillors Catterson, Needs, Rhodes and Yeates.

486. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

487. MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 September 2021 [under the previous name as the Residential and Wellbeing Services Committee] were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

488. 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.

489. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

490. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22 - ANNUAL UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Glenn Smith, Director of Housing Finance Associates Ltd, to the meeting. Upon the invitation of the Chair and after an introduction from the Group Head of Residential Services, Mr Smith presented the report which provided an annual update on the baseline position for the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (HRABP) projections. The HRABP forecasted income, expenditure, investment and borrowing in respect of council housing stock over a 30-year period. Regular review of the HRABP was essential to ensure short, medium, and long-term viability of the plan. The update had been produced by the Council's retained expert consultant, Housing Finance Associates Ltd, and was based on the Council's best available information and realistic assumptions for the coming years.

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Members then took part in a full debate on the item where a number of points were raised including:

- the capital programme and new house building, and the assumptions in the graphs
- interest cover and its movement over the life of the plan in relation to costs and rents
- the 'recycling of stock' and what this meant in terms for selling off housing stock when costs outweighed revenue and properties stopped contributing to the Housing Revenue Account budget

The Group Head of Residential Services and Consultant provided Members with responses to all points raised during the debate. On behalf of the Committee, the Vice-Chair thanked Mr Smith and Housing Finance Associates Ltd for their work in preparing the report.

The recommendation was then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That the annual update of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2021/22 be noted.

491. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY 2022

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Housing Options Manager presented the report which sought approval for the adoption and implementation of the Council's revised Housing Allocations Policy (HAP) 2022. She explained that every local housing authority must publish a Housing Allocations Policy to explain how it prioritised applicants and its procedures for allocating housing. All allocations must be made in strict accordance with the published scheme (Housing Act 1996, section 166A(1) and (14)). The current Housing Allocations Policy had not been fully reviewed since 2012.

Members then took part in a full debate on the item where a number of points were raised including:

- the addendum regarding residents with pets, and the role pets played especially for more vulnerable or isolated residents
- re-registration and the changes in the policy meaning that the numbers on the register could increase
- the Council having a surplus of sheltered housing and what was being done to address this
- the help that was available to residents in the application and bidding processes and how those in need of additional assistance were identified
- the need for safe face-to-face appointments for the most vulnerable residents
- the help available from charities and outside agencies, such as Stonepillow, and the role of the team being in part to advise residents of these services

The Housing Options Manager and Group Head of Residential Services provided Members with responses to all points raised during the debate. It was confirmed that this policy sought a flexible approach to balance the risks for anti-social behaviour whilst reflecting the importance of pets for some residents, that the policy aimed to open up particular types of accommodation (sheltered etc.) to people without a local connection in order to address over supply and that advertisements were being placed to generate more interest, and that a team of assistant housing options officers were available to support people through the application and bidding processes and that it was hoped in-person appointments would continue to be available for those most in need of them.

The recommendations were then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. The revised Housing Allocations Policy 2022 be approved
2. Delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Residential Services to make minor changes to the policy and any amendments necessary to reflect legislative changes

492. ARUN LOCAL COMMUNITY NETWORK UPDATE

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Community Wellbeing presented the report which provided an update to Members on the Arun Local Community Network (LCN), the local grouping of Primary Care Networks encouraged to work in partnership in order to better and more sustainably achieve common goals of addressing local health inequalities and wellbeing related issues. He drew Members' attention to two key points – the proposal to replace the Arun Wellbeing and Health Partnership with the Arun Local Community Network, and that the Local Community Network operated at a District level and could therefore identify and prioritise the issues which were most relevant to our communities. In Arun, the poorest health outcomes were to be found in the areas of highest deprivation and for this reason the initial focus of the Local Community Network would be Courtwick with Toddington and Bersted.

Members then took part in a full debate on the item where a number of points were raised including:

- the importance of having identified the areas of our community that initially need the most help, and then how the programme might roll out and expand
- the involvement of local GPs within the Local Community Network
- the commitment needed from the representative of the Committee on the Arun Local Community Network board
- the nomination of Cllr Mrs Cooper as the Committee's representative on the Arun Local Community Network board, with Cllr Daniells as deputy
- the potential of the project and thanks given to the Officer team for their work on it so far

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- whether other partners, in particular West Sussex County Council, would be matching the financial contributions made by Arun

The Group Head of Community Wellbeing and Communities and Wellbeing Manager provided Members with responses to all points raised during the debate. It was confirmed that work had been done with different partners in the Health sector and County Council to really look at what the local health inequalities were in the targeted areas, as well as get to know the other partners in the network and what each's roles, responsibilities and contributions were. The work done so far was a good foundation upon which to mobilise on-the-ground action.

The recommendations, amended to reflect Cllr Mrs Cooper's nomination as the Committee's representative, were then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. The annual Wellbeing Grant Fund of £5,000 be allocated to the Arun Local Community Network board to be distributed in line with its priorities
2. The Arun Wellbeing and Health Partnership be replaced by the Arun Local Community Network partnership
3. Cllr Mrs Cooper be nominated to the Arun Local Community Network board as representative of the Housing and Wellbeing Committee

493. OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Mrs Cooper provided verbal updates on the West Sussex Mediation Service and Sussex Police and Crime Panel. The Chair provided a verbal update on the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC). Written updates were made available on the meeting's webpage after the meeting.

494. WORK PROGRAMME

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Community Wellbeing explained that following discussion with the Interim Group Head for Corporate Support and Section 151 Officer, it was considered better that the Leisure Operating Contract Report go to the March meeting of the Committee as the Budget report was already going to that meeting and it would fit well with the other's budget monitoring and allow for more information to be gathered. An additional report on Covid Community Champions would be brought to the January meeting in its place. This was agreed by the Committee. The Committee then noted the Work Programme.

495. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee

RESOLVED

That under Section 100a (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the items.

496. COUNCIL TAX INSOLVENCY WRITE OFFS OVER £5,001

The Committee

RESOLVED

That outstanding council tax charges totalling £28,462.30 which were subject to insolvency action, which prevented the Council from pursuing the debtor for payment, be written off.

497. BUSINESS RATES INSOLVENCY WRITE OFFS OVER £10,001

The Committee

RESOLVED

That outstanding business rates and BID charges totalling £10,498.04 which were subject to insolvency action, which prevented the Council from pursuing the debtor for payment, be written off.

498. BUSINESS RATES INSOLVENCY WRITE OFF

The Committee

RESOLVED

That outstanding business rates charges totalling £226,673.09 which were subject to insolvency action, which prevented the Council from pursuing the debtor for payment, be written off.

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499. AWARD OF BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF - 2020/2021 & 2021/2022

The Committee

RESOLVED

That Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief be awarded to the 5 applications in the report for the period stated.

(The meeting concluded at 7.24 pm)