

HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

21 November 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Birch (Chair), Butcher (Vice-Chair), Bicknell, Mrs Cooper, Gunner [substituting for English], Haywood, Long, Lury [substituting for Batley], Pendleton, Wiltshire and Yeates

285. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Batley and English.

286. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

287. MINUTES

The minutes of the Housing and Wellbeing Committee held on 10 September 2024 were approved and signed by the Chair.

288. 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

There were no urgent items.

289. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

290. RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022-2026 ANNUAL UPDATE

The Chair invited the Resident Engagement Officer to present the report to members. The report provided details of progress against the Resident Engagement Strategy and highlighted many of the engagement opportunities available for residents. The Social Housing Regulation Act that came into effect on 1 April 2024 had introduced additional requirements and strengthened consumer regulation. Feedback had been obtained from residents following the introduction of several in person forums in the District. Many residents had indicated their preference for responding to questionnaires and surveys. Officers had therefore launched a suite of transactional surveys as well as consultation surveys as officers work through their programme of policy and strategy reviews amongst other activities.

The Chair invited members to make comment or ask any questions. It was clarified that the "Tenant Participation Advisory Service" had rebranded to "TPAS".

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 21.11.24

The Chair thanked the Resident Engagement Officer for her work with residents and for the comprehensive summary of the work undertaken, which would hopefully lead to improvements in resident's homes and communities in the District. In particular the Arun at Home magazine was a fantastic addition, with a comprehensive summary of the regulations that had been introduced.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the progress against the aims of the strategy.

#### 291. PET POLICY REVIEW

The Group Head Housing, Wellbeing and Communities was invited by the Chair to introduce the report.

The report set out the consultation that had been carried out as part of the review of the Council's Pet's Policy and considering any requirements for change. The Policy highlighted that it was of great interest to residents with 435 responses received during the consultation period. A summary of the key results from the consultation had been provided at paragraph 5. Given the keen interest of both members and residents, and prompted by a member of the Committee, a round table discussion had taken place with members of the Committee to discuss some of the changes they were advocating for. He had also held further discussions with the Neighbourhood Housing Team to understand the implications of those changes and had looked at what other housing providers were doing. As a result key wording had been changed concerning permissions, set out in paragraph 5.7.1 of the report including the principle of not unnecessarily withholding permission. The criteria for decision making had been updated, set out in paragraph 5.7.4 of the report, to assist staff in their decision making and consistency. Both the pet agreement form, appendix 3, and the pet ownership leaflet, appendix 4, had been updated to reflect the changes. The outcome of the discussions with members and staff was that these changes would help to provide consistency to the application of the Policy and reduce the unnecessary work that had impacted the Housing Service.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Yeates and seconded by Councillor Pendleton.

The Chair invited questions and comments from members.

During the discussion the following amendments were made to the report, Pet Policy and Pet Ownership on Arun District Council homes leaflet:

- Recommendation paragraph 2.1.1, page 141: Amend "...Pets Policy..." to read "...Pet Policy...".

Pet Policy:

- Paragraph 1.6, page 149: Amend "...pets and..." to read "...pets, and..."
- Paragraphs 4.6.2 and 4.6.3, page 152: Swap the order of both paragraphs , so that they read from most permissive to least permissive

Pet Ownership on Arun District Council homes leaflet, page 164:

- Column one, reorder rows three and four, so that it reads from most permissive to least permissive
- House or bungalow with private garden: Amend column 3 to read “Will give permission”
- Flat or maisonette without a private garden: Amend “masionette” to read “maisonette”; Amend column 2 to read “one dog or one cat”
- Ground floor flat or maisonette with a private garden: Amend “masionette” to read “maisonette”; Amend column 3 to read “Will give permission”
- Pets we do not allow, Bullet point 4, page 165: add chickens

Councillor Yeates agreed to submit further minor amendments and suggestions for ensuring all the wording in the documents was aligned, in respect of the documents being considered, to the Group Head Housing, Wellbeing and Communities who would make the amendments under his authorised delegated powers.

The Group Head Housing, Wellbeing and Communities reassured the Committee that the Policy would not be a sideways route to not permitting pets and was worded to be permissive. The intention of the Policy was to deliver consistent decisions and not unnecessarily withhold permission.

Further comments were made and officers were thanked for the work undertaken to produce the Policy and for it being positively in favour of pet ownership. If residents felt their application had not been considered fairly their ward members would be able to assist. The leaflet was colourful, informative and easy to understand. A member advised that a residential association within their Ward were happy with the introduction of the Policy. It was asked if what the position would be if circumstances had changed, and a tenant wanted to replace their pet? The Group Head Housing, Wellbeing and Communities advised that the general position was that there was implied permission there already.

The Committee

RESOLVED to

2.1.1 Approve the updated Pet Policy.

2.1.2 Give delegated authority to the Group Head of Housing, Wellbeing and Communities to make minor changes to the policy and any amendments necessary to reflect any operational, legislative and regulatory changes.

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 21.11.24

The Housing Options Manager was invited by the Chair to introduce the report. The Council had received a grant of £1,783,052 from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government ringfenced for the acquisition of seven two-bedroom temporary accommodation homes to fulfil the Council's statutory rehoming duties, and three additional properties, consisting of two three-bedroom and one four-bedroom homes, for the Afghan Resettlement Scheme. Approval was sought to proceed with the acquisition of the properties, including the approval of the capital funding required to make up the remaining cost of the grant awarded and a commuted sum contribution of £630,000 towards the cost. The maximum cost officers were seeking from additional funding would be £1,469,600.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Bicknell and seconded by Councillor Yeates.

The Chair invited questions and comments from members. Members congratulated officers for the successful funding bid, which would save money for the Council in the long run. Responding to a question regarding the expected length of stay in temporary accommodation before permanent accommodation was provided, the Housing Options Manager explained that the Council worked with other housing associations and confirmed that residents in temporary accommodation were given priority so they spent less time in temporary accommodation. Views were expressed that it could be unsettling to be placed in a nice new house and then be told they were moving on again and another view was expressed that the quicker permanent accommodation was found the quicker they could put their roots down. The Housing Options Manager replied that it was difficult to quantify but considered that if they were temporarily housed for a short time and received their permanent home sooner that was a positive. It was confirmed that if a family had to leave their home due to a flooding incident the Council would provide housing to those affected by a natural disaster.

Clarification was sought as to whether or not the Council was allowed to use funding received from Section 106 monies towards the provision of temporary accommodation. If Section 106 monies were used to fund the project would this result in a reduction in the amount of affordable housing being delivered in the District? The Group Head of Housing Communities and Wellbeing advised that no issues had been raised during the approval process undertaken with the Council's Section 106 and Commuted Sums staff officer concerning the use of Section 106 monies for temporary accommodation. He undertook to clarify the position with the staff involved in the process. In response to a further question asked about the consequences for the Council if it used the money it had been given for affordable housing to provide temporary accommodation resulting in the provision of less affordable homes, the member was advised that officers would look into this matter and would respond would of the meeting. The Housing Options Manager advised that the three Afghan Resettlement Scheme homes would become social housing and part of the Council's housing stock. The Chair agreed with the Group Head of Housing Communities that recommendation c) approves use of £630k affordable housing receipts, if approved would be subject to the Group Head looking into the concerns raised by members regarding the use of Section 106 monies for temporary accommodation and confirming it was lawful.

A member suggested that a member briefing on temporary accommodation process would be welcome. The Group Head Housing, Wellbeing and Communities agreed to take the suggestion for a briefing forward.

The Committee

RESOLVED to

- a) Approve the LAHF award of £1,783,052 to acquire seven additional homes for use as temporary accommodation and three for the Afghan Resettlement Scheme of which £1,771,000 relates to the capital purchase.
- b) Approve the use of HRA borrowing as match funding of a maximum £1,469,600.
- c) Approve use of £630k affordable housing S106 receipts, subject to the Group Head of Housing, Communities and Wellbeing confirming that the use of S106 receipts for temporary accommodation was lawful.
- d) Subject to recommendation (e), approves the acquisition of ten new homes for up to a maximum total cost of £3,870,000 for use as temporary accommodation and for the Afghan Resettlement Scheme and in accordance with the LAHF grant conditions; and
- e) Delegates authority to the Group Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Chair of this committee, and the Group Head of Housing, Wellbeing and Communities to provide final written approval of the acquisition subject to the Group Head of Finance being in receipt of a positive financial appraisal.
- f) Notes that an appraisal of the LAHF scheme will be brought to this committee once it is completed and in use.

RECOMMENDS TO THE POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE that it

- g) Recommends to Full Council to include this scheme within the Council's capital programme at a total cost of £3,870,600 with £1,771,000 capital funding from central government grant, £630,000 from Section 106 receipts and £1,469,600 to be funded by the Council through additional borrowing.

## 293. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND UPDATE

The Chair invited the Housing Options Manager to introduce the report to members. Details were provided of the purchase of three additional three bedroom properties and one additional property for the Afghan Resettlement Scheme in Littlehampton funded from a grant received from the Department of Levelling Up,

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 21.11.24

housing and Communities. These properties had been purchased and were occupied.

The Chair invited questions and comments from members. The Chair was pleased that the homes had been purchased and were being occupied.

Members noted the update.

#### 294. HOUSING PERFORMANCE KPI'S

The Group Head Housing, Wellbeing and Communities was invited by the Chair to introduce the Quarter 2 housing performance report. He outlined the report advising that seven targets had improved and eight declined with four of these targets remaining in range and performing.

He provided details of the reason that the average re-let times had been impacted during Quarter 2 due to the letting of several units at New Road that had remained empty for a long period of time. A monthly Debt Management Group had been implemented to improve rent collection. The Housing Service was implementing improvements in its own processes in relation to income recovery. Compliance performance remained high with a continued focus on the safety of residents and the requirements of the regulator. Referring to the housing registration numbers, the number of applicants on the new register since had halved since the previous one had closed. However, the number of applications received each week was increasing and was expected to continue over the next few months. He also reported that five properties had been recovered due to fraud.

The Chair invited members to make comments or ask any questions.

- Responding to questions concerning the increase in debt and persistent arrears and the reasons for this, the Group Head Housing, Wellbeing and Communities explained that over the next two weeks the Debt Management Group was undertaking a deep dive into arrears of £500 or more and those tenants in arrears, who have an introductory tenancy and officers were looking into how they could be supported through more frequent contact. A further deep dive would be undertaken of tenants with more significant arrears to see if the Council was able to recover the arrears through direct payments for the housing element of Universal Credit. An issue was that the Service did not have a dedicated income recovery function and advised that the situation was being looked into. Officers would undertake interventions and take action based on the outcome of the investigations to improve the situation once the work had taken place to understand the reasons for the arrears occurring. With regards to persistent arrears, the Service would always look to recover arrears from current tenants rather than write off the arrears after a period of time. There were a range of actions the Council would take including expressing the need for tenants to pay their housing costs as a priority debt. If arrears persisted the Council could take legal action, often resulting in the arrears being paid back over longer period of time. Once the arrears increased to over £500 it took a long time to return to a positive balance.

- In response to a question concerning the increase in void homes during Quarter 2, the figures had been impacted by bringing units back into use that had been empty for a significant length of time. Once a long-term empty unit was brought back into use it would impact the performance figures. The increase in re-let times was due to the reletting of seven units that had been void for a long time.
- Responding to a question asking if officers had an idea of the expected number applicants on the housing register once everyone had re-registered, he it was advised that at this stage it was not possible to make an estimate. However he expected the overall number to be lower than before, as the re-registration process had removed applicants who no longer required housing but had not informed the Council. He advised he would ask the Housing Option Manager to undertake further analysis of the numbers.
- It was asked if officers had an idea of the amount of fraud taking place and what the potential was for getting these properties back? The Fraud Investigation and Enforcement Officer currently had 17 open cases and was assisted by other staff who provided details of instances they became aware of. Officers were congratulated on this essential work and success in bringing the properties back into the housing stock.
- A comment was made that the improvements in emergency and non-emergency repairs performance since the service had been provided in-house and showed this was a good way forward.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

## 295. COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND DETERMINATIONS

The Chair invited the Group Head of Housing, Wellbeing and Communities to introduce the report to members. He outlined the report that provided details of the Council's complaints handling performance and determinations during Quarter 2. Performance for Stage 1 complaints had improved from 62% to 72% and for Stage 2 complaints it had declined to 67% down from an all-time high of 97% in Quarter 1. However, both remained within target and were an improvement on the previous year. The decline was because of staff sickness and annual leave with the majority of the decline occurring in August and September. It was explained that Stage 2 complaints had a smaller compliment of staff available to deal with them due to the escalation process. The number of formal complaints received about the repairs service compared to the same period in 2024-2025 had reduced with 42 received this Quarter compared to 71 received compared to the previous year and the number of compliments received had increased. The Council had received five Housing Ombudsman determinations, set out at paragraph 4.2, including one for severe maladministration for which the decision had been fully reviewed by officers to ensure the circumstances did not arise again. Three of the five determinations referred to historical cases, due to the Housing Ombudsman moving to a statutory function and catching up on cases from 2020. The Housing Ombudsman's annual performance report for 2023-2024 was attached at appendix 6 and although maladministration had increased it remained at a similar level to other peer group local housing authorities of the same size.

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 21.11.24

The Chair invited members to make comments or ask questions. It was asked if there were any further undetermined historical cases? The Group Head of Housing, Wellbeing and Communities advised he was aware of some recent determinations and undertook to liaise with the Business Improvement Manager and would advise members of the current position. He clarified the process when dealing with Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints and advised that staff involved in a stage 1 complaint could not deal with the complaint if it escalated to stage 2, usually a manager resulting in a smaller pool of staff able to deal with those complaints. He confirmed that other Council staff were able to deal with Stage 2 complaints, such as the Wellbeing and Community Team who had been positive in responding to requests.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and that all orders and recommendations have been compiled with.

296. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2022-2026 - QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2024 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

The Chair invited the Group Head of Housing, Wellbeing and Communities to introduce the report to members. During Quarter 2 five of the nine key performance indicators for Quarter 2 had been achieved. Of the four not achieved, one was because no data was available and one because the status would not be known until Quarter 4.

The Chair invited members to make comments or ask any questions.

Members noted the report.

297. VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS 2025-2029

The Chair invited the Leisure & Wellbeing Business Manager to introduce the report to members. The report endorsed the work of the Council's partners; Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester (VAAC), Community Transport Sussex (CTS), Arun Community Transport (ACT), AGE UK West Sussex Brighton & Hove (AUKWSBH) and Citizens Advice (CA). The recommendation before members ensured the organisations have a commitment to the Council for the next four years, allowing each to plan for future years with the knowledge that the grant was in place. The financial summary set out the proposed increases from 2025, and the following three years from 2026-27 to 2028-29 and included the introduction of a consumer price index increase for each organisation.

The proposals included an additional increase for community transport to fund an Arun local development officer to add value to the current services provided. Both the community transport organisations had been working with other transport partners over the last 18 months to improve cohesion between the organisations. The funding provided to VAAC would continue to be used to fund their costs to provide the service. The CA's 2022 collaborative agreement managed by West Sussex County Council (WSCC) includes all West Sussex District and Borough councils and is due to end 31 March 2029 following the agreement of all the councils that the contract was offering



value for money and it would be of benefit to extend the agreement. Following the publication of the report, officers had received confirmation from WSCC that they will extend the agreement, and that Public Health England will send a letter confirming the decision in due course.

He reported that all the organisations were well versed with the Council's vision and officers were working with these key partners to ensure the Council's wellbeing services needed were delivered without duplicating the work. It was noted that the Council's draft Wellbeing Strategy would be considered at the 4 February 2024 Committee meeting. The Group Head of Climate Change had delegated authority to agree the service level agreements (SLAs), which would include future priorities targets, addressing gaps in services and provision, promotion of their activities and promotion of their services. He advised that both he and the Community Wellbeing Manager would receive quarterly updates from the organisations to ensure they were providing quality services for residents.

The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Cooper and seconded by Councillor Wiltshire.

The Chair invited members to ask questions or make comments. During the discussion a member referred to the Council's significant financial deficit and having been advised that savings needed to be made and asked if it was wise to propose increasing expenditure until 2029. The Leisure & Wellbeing Business Manager advised that following discussion with the Finance Team the intention was for the grants to be in line with the current CA contract, based on a maximum consumer price index increase. Enabling the organisations to preplan and increase their viability and ensuring they had the right resources in place to provide their services. The Community Wellbeing Manager provided details of work undertaken to quantify the effect of not providing the funding to the CA. Residents would still need to be supported through the vital resources the organisation had provided, and it was likely that residents would approach the Council to help them instead, which would have financial and resourcing impacts for the Council. The Council would feel the financial pressure more if it was not supporting those organisations helping the community. The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change confirmed that he had delegated authority to sign off the organisations service level agreements (SLAs) and that the delegated authority was already in place.

During the discussion, comments were made that the report did not articulate what the Council expected the organisations to be delivering. Some members did not feel comfortable to endorse the proposed expenditure for a further four-years without details of what the return would be and whether or not they were providing value for money. The Leisure & Wellbeing Business Manager advised that the Council's expectations would be written into the updated SLAs and provided members with examples. The Community Wellbeing Manager offered to provide members with the guidelines within the current SLAs. In response to members concerns, she assured them that in the SLAs, that there were clauses within the contract that set out the action to be taken if the organisations were not delivering against the SLAs and KPIs. The contracts allowed the Council to break the contract if organisations were not

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 21.11.24

delivering on their requirements. It was confirmed that the monitoring of the SLAs and KPIs was at the forefront of the quarterly monitoring meetings along with additional visits undertaken throughout the year and monitoring of their partnerships with other organisations. A member advised they found the response reassuring as it was the monitoring that was crucial but still had concerns about predicting future requirements in four-year's time.

Further comments were made that the Council would find it difficult to operate without the organisations providing these essential services.

The Committee discussed approving the grants for a shorter period due to the Council's current financial situation, as it was currently difficult to understand what their requirements will be in five years' time. During the discussion views were expressed that these essential organisations carried out very good work and needed the certainty of knowing in advance what their future funding income would be to enable them to plan their future services. A further view was expressed that the Council would not be able to operate without these organisations providing their services. However, members felt reassured that the contract was flexible to enable the Council to amend the SLAs and KPIs if requirements changed during the life of the contract. The Chair drew attention to the large amount of money that some of these organisations brought into the District from funding received by the Government.

A member referred to the individual funding proposed and asked for the figures to be rounded up for each of the organisations.

The Director of Environment and Communities explained that the grants proposed would enable the voluntary sector to assist The District's most vulnerable residents. Further confirmation was given that SLAs were in place and monitored. Just like any other contract if there was uncertainty over their funding the organisations would find it difficult to plan delivery of their future services. One of the main reasons for giving them grants for a longer period was so they had certainty regarding their future.

Councillor Pendleton proposed an amendment to recommendation 2.1, which was seconded by Councillor Yeates, as follows (deletion shown in ~~strikethrough~~ and **additions shown in bold**). This would enable the current administration to review the organisations performance and to make the decision on future funding.

- 1.1 Endorse the work of all voluntary sector partners and the increases in grants from 2026 as shown in the above table, with an annual CPI increase from 2026 added until the ~~final year 2026-27~~ **year end 31 March 2027**.

Following a vote this amendment was declared NOT CARRIED.

A vote then took place on the original recommendations.

The Committee

RESOLVED

- 1.2 Endorse the work of all voluntary sector partners and the increases in grants from 2026 as shown in the above table, with an annual CPI increase from 2026 added until the year 2028-29.
- 1.3 Note that the Group Head of Environment and Climate Change has delegated authority to agree service level agreements within the organisation.

298. LEISURE CONTRACT EXTENSION 2027 - 2032

The Chair reminded the Committee that Appendix 1 of the report was a restricted document. If the Committee wished to discuss the appendix members will need to pass a resolution for the press and the public to be excluded to this item.

The Chair invited the Environmental Services & Strategy Manager to present the report to members. The report set out a proposal for a 5-year extension to the Leisure Operating Contract with Freedom Leisure from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032. Details of the management fee for the duration of the extension period (appendix 1) had been provided as an exempt document due to it being commercially sensitive information.

The key proposals for members to note were set out from paragraph 4.5 of the report. He highlighted the continuation of an enhanced and significant annual management fee for the extension period, providing the Council with cost certainty up until 2032 paid to the Council. The proposals included significant capital investment including major upgrades to both leisure centre gym equipment and an upgrade to the popular 3G pitch and subbase at the Arun Leisure Centre. Freedom Leisure will also build on their success with their highly valued healthy communities programme providing further focus on increasing the leisure activity of unrepresented groups through an additional Community Engagement post. The inclusion of an energy benchmarking clause in the contract extension and whilst this had some financial risk to the Council, it would provide potential benefits allowing Freedom Leisure to renegotiate favourable energy costs with their suppliers. On balance and in consultation with the Council's Group Head of Finance, this was considered a reasonable amendment to the contract and one that would certainly be required if the contract went out to tender on the open market. The proposals had been considered by industry experts the Sports Consultancy who had also worked on the original contract whose comments were summarised at paragraph 4.18, whose view was that the contract would provide a positive offer for the Council that would not be achieved through competitive tendering. This was also the view of officers who had worked hard to foster a positive and proactive relationship with Freedom Leisure to deliver wellbeing opportunities to the community. Despite the number of challenges to the leisure industry in recent years, the partnership between the Council and Freedom Leisure remained strong with Freedom Leisure delivering a number of important and beneficial projects for residents.

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 21.11.24

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Bicknell and seconded by Councillor Hayward.

The Chair invited questions and comments from members. A view was expressed that information on the performance of the contract had not been included in the report and that the wellbeing outcomes had not been defined. A comment was made that no capital investment was included for the Windmill Theatre, Littlehampton. The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager replied that a report on Freedom Leisure's trading and performance had been considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 25 January 2024, which had been well received, and key performance indicators were considered quarterly. He appreciated the comments made about the timing of the report and explained it had been necessary due to the timeline required to extend the contract, as otherwise the Council may be required to go out to procurement may not be able to extend the contract. The contract was rigorously monitored and a report on how the contract was performing would be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 4 February 2025. The Leisure Wellbeing and Business Manager, whose role it was to monitor the performance of the contract against the KPIs and specifications, provided further details of the monitoring that took place. He had daily communications with Freedom Leisure with performance data shared at monthly meetings and action taken if it was not positive. A member commented that they had confidence in the service provided by Freedom Leisure and supported the extension of their contract.

The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager responded to a number of comments concerning the Windmill Theatre capital investment, which members considered was an important provision in Littlehampton and should receive investment. He advised that it would be for Freedom Leisure to put forward proposals that made financial sense for them. It was for the Council to put forward a vision and proposal and if Freedom Leisure was asked to revisit it would impact the proposed management fee. It was reasonable to understand why plans had not been put forward to include the Windmill Theatre. However, this did not mean they were not committed to providing the service during the remainder of the contract. Freedom Leisure had worked hard to bring the Windmill Theatre back to use following the fire and any proposals would likely include capital funding in the contract. He advised that if the proposal was taken forward at this stage it would affect the completion of the contract. He suggested that if the contract extension was approved officers would report back to a future Committee meeting with details of proposals for the Windmill Theatre and how this would affect the management fee.

Responding to the answers provided by officers a member would have welcomed higher level monitoring with the results reported to members when considering approving the contract. They also expressed the view that they would be happy for Freedom Leisure to undertake capital investment if that resulted in a lower management fee. The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager advised that officers would be happy to undertake investigations into the available options and report back to the Committee with details of what the capital investment would look like and the implications to the management fee.

A member suggested that in future it may be helpful for the report to set out a range of options for the Committee to consider. The Director of Environment and Communities advised that if the Committee wanted officers to look at different options for the Windmill Theatre, in this case there were more options to available than being funded by Freedom Leisure. She undertook to provide a separate piece of work to look at options for the funding of the Windmill Theatre that would extend wider than Freedom Leisure. This approach was welcomed by members.

Clarification was sought as to whether the report on the Windmill Theatre would be considered by this Committee or the Economy Committee who have discussed the Theatre in the past and would it include broader options. The Director of Environment and Communities advised that the Committee that would consider the report would depend on the types of funding sources found in line with the Council's Constitution.

The Committee:

**RESOLVED**

Approves a 5-year extension of the Leisure Operating Contract from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032 based on the information outlined in this report.

**299. OUTSIDE BODIES - FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS**

The Committee received a report from Councillor Long giving an update on the West Sussex County Council Health and Adult Social Care Committee and from Councillor Carol Birch giving an update on the Sussex Police and Crime Panel.

**300. WORK PROGRAMME**

A discussion took place concerning progress regarding options for the Flaxmean sheltered housing scheme following their approval at a previous Committee meeting during 2021. A member referred to the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 23 November 2024 where members had been advised a member briefing would take place on the feasibility of sheltered housing and asked when the proposals would be considered by this Committee. The Group Head of Housing, Wellbeing and Communities confirmed that a member briefing had taken place earlier this year. He advised that since then the sheltered housing capital budget had been refiled and a further feasibility survey carried out. The briefing outlined a number of options based on a previous feasibility study that had not been progressed and an option to progress was agreed at that briefing. Architects and Technical officers had been instructed to undertake work to deliver the sheltered housing scheme on the basis of the feasibility that related to the remodelling of Flaxmean. Following the Committee will consider a report recommending an option. Since the original feasibility scheme had been produced the costs had increased significantly and the funds that had been made available would not now deliver across the whole of the housing stock. . He confirmed there would be no capital spending during this financial year on Flaxmean whilst the work was being completed. He confirmed that the dates in respect of the feasibility

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 21.11.24

study undertaken were accurate. He anticipated the feasibility results would be reported back to this Committee during the next financial year.

A further question was asked about the proposals coming forward during the next financial year 2025-26 and if this be to consider work due commence during 2025-26 or the authorisation of an option. The Chair referred to the amount of work that been undertaken in the Housing service since the Group Head of Housing, Wellbeing and Communities had started his role. The Group Head of Housing, Wellbeing and Communities added that, as soon as he was able to after gaining an understanding the original feasibility study, of which some of the information was over two years old, he had informed members of the position.

A member made a statement that she and other members had been trying to focus on sheltered accommodation for a number of years and appreciated that the Group Head of Housing, Wellbeing and Communities was moving forward with sheltered housing. Members wanted this work done and wanted to trust the officer team involved and the timescales. They did not want to be in the same position on a year's time and wanted to be there for their residents.

The Committee noted the Work Programme for 2024-25.

(The meeting concluded at 8.10 pm)