

## HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2018 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Parkin (Vice Chairman) (In the Chair)

Cllrs. Abraham, Dr. Canet, Coleman, Esler, Eyre, Parson, Pearsall and Miss. Stack

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Gaywood, Horwood and Lowe

Cllr. Searles was also present.

### 22. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 18 September 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 23. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

### 24. Actions from Previous Meetings

The actions were noted.

### 25. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder's report was noted as a good news item. The Committee congratulated Cllr Michelle Lowe on winning the 'Health and Care' category at the awards hosted by the Local Government Information Unit and Churches, Charities and Local Authorities on 6 November. The Committee praised her and the Officers for all their hard work.

### 26. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

### 27. Budget: Service Reviews and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

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The Chief Finance Officer presented a report, which explained that this was the second stage of the budget process and ensured that all Members of the Advisory Committees had a role to play in the governance of the Council and the budget decision making process. He explained that since the current financial strategy was introduced in 2011/12, over £7 million of savings had been agreed.

To continue to have a balanced budget position and remain financially self-sufficient, a net savings requirement of £100,000 per annum was included in the budget. The Chief Finance Officer also advised Members that other pressures may come out later in the budget process such as when the Local Government Finance Settlement was announced in December. These may result in additional savings being required.

A growth proposal had been identified in the report for this Committee but Members were asked for their suggestions in order to achieve the £100,000 net saving required for the next year, which would be considered by Cabinet, before finalising the budget for 2019/20.

There was general discussion with regard to the invaluable service the HERO scheme provided and whether it needed to be a growth item. It was confirmed that an additional officer had recently been recruited using additional government funding available for homelessness. Some concern was expressed that if the need was increasing rather than supplying more officers, should the Council not be investigating the underlying cause of that need first before recruiting more staff. There was general support for it as a potential growth item should it be needed.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) the growth proposal identified in Appendix D to the report (SCIA 15), applicable to this Advisory Committee, be considered; and
- b) consideration be given to asking Officers to investigate whether there was an increased need which outweighed the current provision of the HERO service, and if so the Committee gave its general support to the scheme as a growth item.

### 28. Process undertaken to alter discretionary grant maximums associated with the Housing Assistance Policy

The Private Sector Housing Team Leader presented a report which sought amendments to the current Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) adopted in December 2017 as demand for discretionary funding had dramatically increased. As a result of this dramatic increase the ability to better manage demand against available resource is required for all discretionary assistance, ensuring sufficient resources remained for the core services especially Mandatory Disabled Facility Grants.

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Members took the opportunity to ask questions of clarification, it was confirmed that there was a degree of flexibility and discretion in awarding of grants. In response to the suggestion of a possible additional income stream of charging those who could afford advice on home improvements but didn't know where to go, the Private Sector Housing Team Leader responded that when this does occur customers are provided with the details of the Home Improvement Agency.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: It be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) a reduction of the maximum Accelerated Facility Grant from the current £7,500 to £6,500 and reduction of the Specific Situation Funding from the current £50,000 to £0.00 be approved; and
- b) the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health (and any successor with responsibility for Housing) be delegated authority to amend all discretionary grant maximums.

### 29. 'Local Ladder' Shared Ownership Grant Scheme

The Housing Policy Manager advised Members that he had hoped to be taking a report to Cabinet on 6 December 2018 but due to some outstanding issues it would only be possible to report it to Cabinet on 10 January 2019. As it was hoped to launch the product in January 2019 and the next meeting of Housing & Health Advisory Committee was not until 27 February 2019, it would not be possible to bring the report to this committee prior to Cabinet. However, the Housing Policy Manager said he would circulate the draft report to Members for comment before submitting the final report to Cabinet.

Resolved: That Members support officers to continue to develop the '*Local Ladder*' bespoke shared-ownership grant scheme and note that a final report would be taken to Cabinet in January 2019 seeking formal approval of the finished product.

### 30. Housing Allocations Policy

The Head of Housing & Health presented the report which sought approval of the revised Sevenoaks District Housing Allocations Policy to incorporate changes in legislation and to ensure that social housing allocations prioritise those with the greatest housing need. She advised that a couple of further amendments were required to 3.1 'Local Connection' which needed to reflect the Homelessness Code of Guidance, and 3.2 which needed to include the new Local Essential Worker definition.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

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Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet to recommend to Council, the approval of the Housing Allocations Policy subject to

a) 3.1 (a) under 'Local Connection' being amended to read

'a) Having lived permanently in Sevenoaks District continuously for 6 out of the last 12 months, or 3 years in total out of the last 5 years'

to bring it in line with the Homelessness Code of Conduct; and

b) the Council's definition of Local Essential Workers' criteria, as set out within the draft Local Plan, be included in 3.2 'Employment in Sevenoaks District.'

### 31. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

The minutes of the meetings of the Health Liaison Board held on 23 May 2018 and 7 November 2018, were noted.

### 32. Work Plan

The work plan was noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.33 PM

CHAIRMAN