

HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2019 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Maskell (Chairman)

Cllr. Coleman (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Clack, Perry Cole, G. Darrington, Foster, Griffiths, Harrison, Osborne-Jackson, Piper and Roy

Cllrs. Pender and Purves were also present.

11. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Health Advisory Committee held on 11 June 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

For transparency, Cllr Griffiths advised that she was a member of her local Patient Participation Group, and Cllr Coleman advised that she was an Almshouses Trustee.

13. Actions from Previous Meetings

There were none.

14. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder advised that there had been an increase in affordable housing in the district due to the new development in Edenbridge, which would have a positive impact on the 547 people on the housing register with a waiting time of 17 months. Homelessness data was [tabled](#) and the Head of Housing and Health advised that homelessness was monitored monthly and there had been an increase in use of emergency accommodation, advising of why emergency accommodation was used. The Portfolio Holder referred to Housing Energy Retraining Options ([HERO](#)) officers providing support and advice on a number of topics including housing problems and debt advice to help prevent homelessness. He also referred to Quercus Housing's aim to provide 100 affordable houses in 10 years.

In response to questions, the Head of Housing and Health advised that the increased use of emergency accommodation was due to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 along with an increase in people seeking help with complex needs. She also explained that the accommodation was outside of the district,

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 8 October 2019

which had caused many service users to seek alternative accommodation, resulting in placements occasionally not being taken up.

15. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

16. West Kent Housing Association Presentation

The Chairman welcomed Frank Czarnowski, the Chief Executive for West Kent Housing Association (WKH) and thanked him for his work for West Kent Housing in the knowledge that this would be his last meeting at the Council before his retirement. The Chief Executive for West Kent Housing Association gave a [presentation](#) on the Housing Association's work to deliver social housing in Sevenoaks District.

The Chief Executive for West Kent Housing advised that the Housing Association had aimed to provide affordable housing, caring communities and independent living communities. Various schemes had been carried out to meet these objectives including an increase in rural housing, the extra care scheme in White Oak Court, independent living in Woodlands Court, the provision of internal training in mental health first aid and the setting up of pop up business schools.

Members discussed and raised concerns regarding West Kent Housing's approach to ensure good quality housing and efficient communication when maintenance concerns were raised by residents. The Chief Executive for WKH suggested that changes in resource allocations could have been the reason for delays in solving maintenance issues. Members enquired further into how frequently properties were visited in order to maintain the quality of housing. They were informed that there were no routine visits of houses and usually only being visited when repairs need to be made. Currently 94% of repairs had been completed on time. To gauge satisfaction of the service users during the moving process to new residencies, engagement was undertaken with new tenants in their first six months of residency. The Chairman stated it was clear that West Kent Housing were addressing problems with resourcing, support and communication, highlighting that these issues were problematic for many housing associations.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for West Kent Housing for attending the meeting.

The Chief Officer People & Places advised that a WKH were reviewing their home standards. She would seek the outcomes and have them circulated. Following the issues raised by Members it was suggested that a workshop with the new Chief Executive and Housing Officer should be arranged.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

17. Budget 2020/21: Service Dashboards and service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

The Chief Officer Finance & Trading 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 £93,000 for 2020/21 was included in the budget. The Chief Officer Finance & Trading 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.

No growth and savings proposals were included in the report for this Committee but Members were asked for their suggestions, in order to achieve the £93,000 net saving required for the next year, which would be considered by Cabinet, before finalising the budget for 2020/21.

Members gave their individual ideas for growth and savings items and considered whether there was anything they wanted taken forward as potential growth or savings suggestions. A number of growth and savings items were suggested and discussed, including the suggestion that the Housing Policy Manager should investigate the possibility of charging for the provision of the housing register.

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) no growth and savings proposals had been identified in Appendix D to the report; and
- b) the following options be put forward to Cabinet
 - Growth (increased expenditure or reduced income)
 - An additional HERO officer
 - Savings (reduced expenditure or increased income)
 - Provision of our own energy supply - buying in bulk from suppliers - passing a percentage of the savings onto residents

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 8 October 2019

18. Almshouses Project

The Housing Policy Manager presented the report which updated Members on key activities being undertaken which supported the District Council's Housing Strategy 2017 as well as key themes in the Community Plan 2013 - 2028.

The Housing Policy Manager advised that one of the priorities was expanding support to almshouses charities and other small providers, and to help create a support network. A forum was being arranged for early 2020, the date of which would be circulated to members.

Action 1: The Housing Policy Manager to circulate maps indicating the location of the Almshouses in the District.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

19. Minutes of the Health Liaison Board

The Minutes of the meeting of the Health Liaison Board held on 11 June 2019, were noted.

20. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the inclusion an Almshouses Progress Report and West Kent Housing Association Update for the Summer 2020 meeting.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.13 PM

CHAIRMAN