

HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Perry Cole (Chairman)

Cllr. Harrison (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Bulford, C.Morgan, Camp, Clack, G. Darrington, Edwards-Winser, Gustard, Hudson, Lindop and Streatfeild

Cllrs. Penny Cole, P. Darrington, Horwood and Manston were also present.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Perry Cole be appointed as Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the year 2023-24.

(Cllr. Perry Cole in the Chair).

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Harrison be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the Advisory Committee for the year 2023-24.

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Housing and Health Advisory Committee held on 7 February 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5. Actions from Previous Meetings

There were none.

6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman and Portfolio Holder gave an update to the Committee. He advised that the Council had adopted the Homelessness Review and Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy which outlined the District's needs in relation to homelessness. The document also included actions the Council would take for early intervention, prevention and support. He reported that a successful funding bid

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was made to the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund securing a further £677,230 in order to provide accommodation and homelessness support up to 2025.

He further informed Members that the Council had secured funding from the Local Authority Housing Fund to deliver affordable housing in the District to support the Homes for Ukraine scheme. It was also explained that the Council had worked alongside the learning support organisation HFT, to lease Stay Green Homes in Edenbridge, providing 6 units of affordable rented accommodation for single women and single mothers.

On health matters the Portfolio Holder advised that the Sevenoaks District Health & Wellbeing Action Plan 2023-24 was published in April 2023 which would be monitored by the Advisory Committee throughout the year. The Council had also secured £35,000 from the Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Health and Care Partnership to support health and community based development work in the northern parishes. In addition, Kent Public Health had reported that One You funding for the 2022/23 year was confirmed which would enable the Team to continue to provide health related services. The Council had also submitted a bid for an additional One You Advisor to support the new Edenbridge Medical Hub.

7. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

8. Role of the Advisory Committee and Key Challenges

The Chief Officer - People and Places, presented the report and gave a presentation to the Committee. She introduced the role of the Advisory Committee, its Terms of Reference and areas of responsibility including the key issues and challenges facing those areas.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9. West Kent Housing Update

The Chairman welcomed Tracy Allison, West Kent Housing Association's Chief Executive (WKHA) and Cathy McCarthy, Housing Director WKHA, to the meeting. Members received a presentation on the partnership work, customer satisfaction, home repairs, arrears, mould and recovery from the pandemic.

Members took the opportunity to ask questions focused on the future challenges of the organisation and the housing stock in the District. The Chief Executive explained that the biggest challenge included the increased complexity of the lives of residents owing to the cost of living crisis and the pandemic. Another challenge was to deliver affordable rented accommodation that was lower than market value. Members were informed that the Council could assist West Kent Housing by supporting the delivery of more affordable homes in the District and better seeking to understand the variety of Resident's Housing needs.

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In response to a query, the Chief Executive agreed to circulate further information to the Committee on the Mill's Crescent Low-carbon scheme.

The Chairman thanked the WKHA Chief Executive and Housing Director for the update.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10. Intermediate Housing Policy

The Housing Strategy Manager presented the report which asked the Advisory Committee to provide feedback and recommend to Cabinet the draft intermediate housing policy applying to Discounted Market Housing. The report also proposed revisions to the Council's adopted local First Homes policy which followed a review after its first year of operation. She explained that the updated draft local policy for Discounted Market Housing, if approved, would be included within the Sevenoaks Intermediate Housing Protocol 2023.

Members asked questions of clarification, which focused on the proposals for Discounted Market Housing. The Housing Strategy Manager explained that the proposed changes sought to make more homes available for local Residents. It was confirmed that the policy included a local connection criteria which meant that for an initial period, homes were marketed locally to residents of the District.

It was also explained that moving the cap on the Local First Homes Policy to require a minimum discount of 30% would increase developer's ability to generate rented homes for those residents on the housing register. In response to a question on the local income cap the Housing Strategy Manager would circulate further clarification information to the Committee. Some Members expressed that the proposals should be re-assessed in one year to review the impact of the changes.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

It was moved by the Chairman that the draft policy be recommended to Cabinet for approval subject to a review in one year.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that, subject to review in one years' time, the draft intermediate housing policy applying to Discounted Market Housing and proposed revisions to the Council's adopted local First Homes policy be approved.

11. Gypsy and Traveller Allocation Policy

The Housing Strategy Manager presented the report which proposed a Gypsy and Traveller Allocations Policy in relation to Romani Way, Edenbridge. She explained

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that as part of the agreed Sevenoaks District Housing Accommodation Policy, it was recommended that applicants for vacant pitches on the site would be required to join the Housing Register. The new policy would bring the process in line with the advertisement and letting of social housing within the district and provide a fair and transparent method of allocating pitches when they became available. It would also be tailored to better accommodate the culture of a Romani Traveller.

Members were informed that Officers from the Council had attended the site on 22 March 2023 to discuss the policy and assess the needs of the Residents. Turn out from Residents had been high and feedback had been positive.

The Housing Strategy Manager also explained that the policy was open to comments and would be kept under constant review. She explained that revisions had been made to the report which included updating exclusions to the register to tackle the use of threatening language or behaviour to any officer of the Council or agent or any persons attending sites on behalf of the Council. In addition, the decision to exclude an applicant would be made by the Housing Register Allocation Panel. They would take into account any supporting information from the applicant, a current or previous landlord(s), the Police and/or Probation or any other relevant professional body.

In response to questions around the vacant pitches at Romani Way, it was explained that works were required to make them habitable as there had been problems with fly-tipping. Officers were working on getting the pitches back into use.

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 the draft Gypsy and Traveller Allocation Policy, be approved and adopted for implementation.

12. Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) 1 update

The Housing Strategy Manager presented the report which provided an update on the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) Phase one. The Council had secured funding to provide energy efficiency improvements to twenty-nine homes in the District that had poor energy efficiency scores and low household income. Upgrades included fitting insulation, low-carbon heating and solar panels.

Work had also begun on HUG phase two and it was hoped that the Council would provide energy efficiency upgrades to sixty homes by 2025 through the scheme. If successful, it was also hoped that a third scheme would be implemented. The Housing Strategy Manager confirmed that she would circulate the locations of the properties that were upgraded in phase 1 to the Committee.

Members asked questions of clarification that focused on energy readings and the eligibility of properties. It was confirmed that energy readings were certified and calculated by engineers. Officers also advised Members that mobile homes could

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not be upgraded through the HUG scheme but the Council had provided a Green Homes Grant which allowed them to provide energy efficiency measures for up to 40 mobile homes in the District.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the report be noted.

13. To note the Minutes of the Health Liaison Board

The Minutes of the Health Liaison Board held on 7 June 2023 were noted.

14. Work Plan

Members noted the work plan with the following changes:

12 September 2023:

- Homes for Ukraine and Asylum Scheme Update
- Sevenoaks District Health and Wellbeing Action Plan quarterly update

7 November 2023:

- Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund Year 1 update
- Housing Strategy - one year on
- Housing Stock and Waiting Times in the District Update

23 January 2024:

- Sevenoaks District Health and Wellbeing Action Plan quarterly update

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 08.48PM

CHAIRMAN