

NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the **HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE** held on Monday, 15 January 2018 in the Civic Suite, Castle House at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillor R.B. Laughton (Chairman)
Councillor T. Wendels (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs B.M. Brooks, Mrs A.C. Brooks, Mrs I. Brown, M. Buttery, K. Girling, Mrs S.M. Michael, N. Mitchell, Mrs P. Rainbow and Mrs S. Soar.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor P.C. Duncan

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman took the opportunity to thank the team of Officers who had worked on the resettlement of the Syrian Refugees and the event held prior to Christmas. The Newark Advertiser had published an article on the matter which had been well received by its readers.

The Director – Safety advised the Committee that the Council had been selected as a finalist in the UK Housing Awards in the Strategic Local Authority of the Year category, the results of which would be known in May 2018.

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received by Councillor R. Crowe.

31. DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND AS TO THE PARTY WHIP

NOTED: that no Member or Officer declared any interest pursuant to any statutory requirement in any matter discussed or voted upon at the meeting.

32. DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

NOTED: that there would be an audio recording of the meeting undertaken by the Council.

33. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 NOVEMBER 2017

Councillor Mrs Soar advised that she had submitted her apologies for the meeting and requested that these be recorded.

AGREED (unanimously) that, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Mrs Soar's apologies for absence, the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. SHERWOOD & NEWARK CITIZEN ADVICE (SNCA)
PRESENTATION OF PERFORMANCE OUTTURNS 2016-17

The Committee considered the joint presentation by the Business Manager – Housing & Safeguarding and Jackie Insley, Chief Officer (SNCA) in relation to the performance targets in respect of core advice service provision as set out in the Service Level Agreement between the SNCA and the Council, for which grant funding was awarded. Circulated at the meeting was an ‘Our Impact in 2016/17’ sheet produced by SNCA.

Ms Insley advised that the SNCA’s relocation to Castle House had been well received by officers, volunteers and clients. She explained that the service being provided in Ollerton had been reduced to 2 days per week due to resource issues. It was hoped that more could be made of providing assistance to clients via email and webchat. It was, however, acknowledged that the most vulnerable clients continued to require face to face interaction and this would not be compromised. Ms Insley acknowledged that the service could not exist without their volunteers. She stated that the recruitment of volunteers was costly due to the amount of training that was required and that attempts to secure additional funding may be required. It was reported that the SNCA’s finances were sound at present but that working arrangements were constantly reviewed. Talks had commenced with Bassetlaw CA to explore the possibility of developing a working partnership but that the allocation of funding streams for both areas must be discussed in depth so that all parties were clear as to its allocation.

Members agreed that the service provided an invaluable resource to the district’s residents. In noting the figures provided for clients using the service, a Member referred to the high number of queries where there was no indication of where the client lived, suggesting that these might be persons from outside the district. He queried why people from out of the district did not use services more local to themselves. Ms Insley advised that it was hoped that in future a new recording system would eradicate the ‘others’ category from the list of clients and clarify whether they were clients from within the district or outside. However, she made the point that the ‘others’ figure took into account those who did not wish to divulge their home address, which did not necessarily mean that they were from outside the district. She also stated that SNCA were keen never to turn any client away who had made the effort to seek its assistance regardless of their home address.

The Chairman of the Committee asked Ms Insley to pass on the Committee’s thanks to all her officers and volunteers for the work they undertook to assist the residents of Newark and Sherwood.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report, particularly the performance outturns and annual/impact reports regarding the provision of core advice services to residents in the district by Sherwood and Newark Citizens Advice, be noted.

35. HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE REVENUE BUDGET 2018/19

The Committee considered the report presented by the Assistant Business Manager – Financial Strategy & Performance which provided information on the budget and scale of fees and charges for the areas that fell within the remit of the Committee for 2018/2019.

The revenue budget proposals were listed at paragraph 3 of the report together with the major variances between the 2017/18 and 2018/19 budgets.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the final Committee budget as shown in Appendix A to the report be recommended to Policy & Finance Committee at its meeting on 22 February 2018 for inclusion in the overall Council budget; and
- (b) the scale of fees and charges as shown at Appendix B be recommended to Policy & Finance Committee at its meeting on 22 February 2018 and Council on 8 March 2018.

36. 5 YEAR HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Strategic Housing in relation to progress with the 5 Year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Development Programme and the proposal to develop an extra care facility in Ollerton in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council.

The report provided Members with information as to the Phase One – Site Progression and gave further detail of the Gladstone House – Extra Care Scheme, Homes & Communities Agency Grant Funding and the Budgetary Position. Paragraph 4 of the report related to the proposed extra care facility in Ollerton.

A Member of the Committee commented that he was pleased to read of the proposed extra care facility in Ollerton. However, he queried whether the increased development costs on Phase One of the development programme would jeopardise the extra care proposal if the application for grant funding to the HCA towards Phase One was unsuccessful. The Business Manager advised that it could have an impact given that it could affect the available capital within the HRA Business Plan for new development, but reassured Members that capital costs associated with the development programme were constantly reviewed. The increased costs had resulted from issues with securing planning permission and the small scale of the developments which had led to unforeseen additional costs. It was noted that NCC was reviewing its approach to extra care with a view to developing a new strategy. This would be presented to its Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee in early 2018. It was essential that NCC supported, in principle, the development of extra care facility in order for it to proceed.

Members noted that the original cost per unit had been set at a low level and queried who had set the original estimate and how this would be avoided in the future. The Business Manager advised that the original figure had been based on previous development delivery costs but that the additional abnormal costs were not known at that time. In relation to the bid submitted to the HCA for funding, Members were informed that the HCA had encouraged the Council to submit the bid and therefore it was hoped that it would be successful.

The Chairman noted that 6 units had been opened in Caunton which had been developed by NCHA. These were 2 bedroomed semi-detached and had cost approximately £144,000 each, which was significantly more expensive than those developed by the Council. He suggested that it would benefit the Committee to understand the cost of developing the units if they met with a senior member of the team from the developers, Robert Woodheads. The Business Manager suggested that it would also be beneficial to explore the challenges on a site by site basis.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the current progress to deliver the 5 year HRA development programme be noted;
- (b) in principle, approval be given for Officers to progress the feasibility work to develop an extra care facility in Ollerton and continue discussions with Nottinghamshire County Council regarding this; and
- (c) the Business Manager – Strategic House extend an invitation to a member of the development team from Robert Woodheads to attend a meeting of the Committee to discuss the challenges of the development programme on a site by site basis.

37. 2017 ROUGH SLEEPERS COUNT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing & Safeguarding in relation to the annual figure submitted to the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) which demonstrated that local initiatives had been effective in tackling rough sleeping locally.

The report set out the methodology used to undertake the count and the agencies involved in its completion.

A Member raised the issue of beggars on the streets suggesting that the public should not give them money as it would likely encourage others to beg in the town. He added that more emphasis was needed on rough sleepers and the homeless. The Business Manager advised that there was a difference between beggars and rough sleepers and that in the district's known hotspots information was to be distributed advising the public and shop owners on how to report any incidents. She noted that receiving such information enabled the Council to monitor the situation and react to any incidents.

All Members agreed that despite the increase in the national figures for rough sleeping, the Business Manager's team were to be congratulated for reducing the levels in Newark and Sherwood.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report and the progress made in tackling rough sleeping in the district be noted.

38. URGENCY ITEM – MINUTE OF DECISION
Approval of Two Consultation Responses for Submission to the DCLG relating to the Implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018

NOTED the responses submitted to the DCLG in relation to the Homeless Code of Guidance and the H-Click – New Burdens Assessment.

The meeting closed at 7.02pm

Chairman