

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Homes & Communities Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts. NG24 1BY on Monday, 10 September 2018 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor Mrs C Brooks, Councillor Mrs I Brown, Councillor M Buttery, Councillor N Mison, Councillor Mrs P Rainbow, Councillor Mrs S Saddington and Councillor Mrs S Soar

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Mrs S Michael and Councillor N Mitchell

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor P Duncan, Councillor P Peacock and Councillor D Staples

15 DECLARATIONS 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.

16 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

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

17 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 ORDER OF BUSINESS

With the agreement of the Committee the Chairman moved discussion of the Forward Plan to the last item on the Agenda. All other items remained unchanged.

19 HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation from the Business Manager – Housing & Safeguarding and the Senior Housing Options Officer in relation to the Homelessness Reduction Act. The presentation provided an update 3 months on from the Acts implementation and the new Duty to Refer that was to come into force in October 2018.

The presentation provided the background to the Act and what the 12 main changes were. It also gave details of the implementation process and how the Council compared with the national and county trends and changes. Further details of the Duty to Refer were also included and how the Council would facilitate that together with details of the next steps that the Council were to follow.

In considering the presentation Members raised a number of issues. They noted, with regret, that a bed and breakfast had been used as temporary accommodation for those presenting as homeless and that this was the first time this had occurred in 18 years.

A Member queried whether there was any discretion available to Officers when rehoming people if the individual/family considered it to be an unsafe location. In response the Senior Housing Options Officer advised that the process remained unchanged and that all circumstances would be given due consideration. She added that there may be a requirement for input from the Police and/or a need for evidence to be supplied to support the claim. It was noted that the main reason for homelessness was due to private tenancy evictions.

A Member stated that within her Ward there were a couple of rough sleepers who migrated between the Newark & Sherwood and Mansfield districts and queried whether the Council worked in partnership with Mansfield District Council (MDC). Members were advised that partnership working was ongoing with both MDC and Ashfield District Council in relation to homelessness.

AGREED that the presentation be noted.

20 THE BETTER CARE FUND 2018/19 - UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Environmental Health & Licensing in relation to the schemes being delivered from funding from the district's allocation of the Better Care fund in 2018/19.

It was reported that the Care Act 2014 amended the NHS Act 2006 to provide the legislative basis for the Better Care Fund (BCF). It created a local single pooled budget to incentivise the NHS and local government to work more closely together around people, placing their wellbeing as the focus of health and care services and shifting resources into social care and community services for the benefit of the people, communities and health and care. The report also set out the governance arrangements for the fund together with the delivery of local schemes. Information was also provided in relation to: mandatory disabled facilities grants; discretionary DFGs; handy person adaptations schemes; warm homes on prescription; assisted technology; and accessible homes together with schemes for future years and potential future developments.

In considering the report Members all agreed that there was a requirement for more accessible homes and that they would wish to see such homes included in the Council's current building programme, noting that it was easier to build an accessible property rather than having to adapt it at a later stage.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the schemes for 2018/19 be supported; and
- (b) if possible, accessible homes be included in the Council's building programme.

21 AMENDMENT TO DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT POLICY - DISCRETIONARY FUNDING

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Environmental Health & Licensing which sought Members’ approval for an interim amendment to the policy covering the maximum amount of funding eligible from the discretionary element of the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

It was reported that DFGs were mandatory grants designed to provide adaptations to the home to allow a disabled person to continue living in the community. The grants were subject to a means test with some applicants having to pay a contribution towards the cost of the works. Referrals for grants were received from the Occupational Therapy team of the County Council. The Policy also set out the limited circumstances under which the Council might consider using discretionary powers to provide additional grant over and above the mandatory maximum of DFG in circumstances that would fall outside normal grant eligibility. The report set out that the maximum award for a mandatory DFG scheme was £30,000 but that this was often exceeded for more complex adaptations. Part 2 of the Policy set out the section on discretionary help. The proposed amendment was to increase the discretionary grant from £10,000 to £15,000 but only in exceptional circumstances and after all other sources of funding had been exhausted. It was further proposed that the additional funding would only be awarded following consultation with the Director – Safety and that the interim arrangement would be reviewed within 12 months or sooner if the outcomes from the national review of DFGs were known.

In noting the contents of the report a Member queried what arrangements were in place should the allocated budget for disabled facilities adaptations be overspent. The Business Manager advised that referrals were received from Occupational Therapy with the Council administering the budget which was closely monitored. He added that there were a number of options available should the upper limit be reached e.g. applying to the DCLG for additional funds.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the additional £5,000 of discretionary funding for DFG schemes, in exceptional circumstances, be approved;
- (b) the additional discretionary funding only be awarded following consultation with the Director – Safety; and
- (c) a review of the Policy be undertaken within 12 months with a further report being presented to the Homes & Communities Committee.

22 SHERWOOD PUBLIC SERVICES HUB UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Customer Services & External Communications which updated Members on the possible provision of a Public Services Hub in Ollerton. The report also sought Members’ approval of the initial Feasibility Study Report.

The report set out that in 2014 the Council in conjunction with the Department of Work and Pensions, Dukeries Community College and Ollerton & Boughton Town Council commenced delivery of a joint service from Ollerton & Boughton Town Hall. Initially the service operated for 1 day a week but due to demand it was increased to 2 days per week in April 2017. The report set out the reasons behind the need for an enhanced face to face provision in Ollerton and other factors which further strengthened the requirement.

Paragraph 3 of the report set out the purpose of the feasibility study as follows: to assess the suitability of the preferred site, determination of the maximum scale of any development on site, the taking into account of planning constraints and to establish the requirements of partners who might provide services from the Hub, reflecting future health and social care needs with paragraph 4 setting out the next steps.

The Local Member who was in attendance at the meeting addressed the Committee and welcomed the report. He added that he would have wished to see the report reflect more accurately the poor health care facilities in the area and the level of deprivation experienced by some residents, referring to statistics about life expectancy. He added further that the potential gains from the proposed facilities would be extremely beneficial and would go some way to solving some of the issues experienced by residents.

All Members of the Committee were in agreement that the proposed Sherwood Public Services Hub was to be welcomed and would not just be where residents accessed medical facilities. A Member noted that the project relied heavily on support from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and queried whether there was any indication as to when they would confirm if they were supporting the project.

The Business Manager noted and agreed that it was not just a proposal to provide medical facilities and recognised that as it stood there was a heavy involvement from the CCG. She referred to paragraph 4.3 of the report which noted the amendment to the project that would be required should the CCG not commit to supporting the scheme.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the feasibility study be approved; and
- (b) an update report be brought back to a future meeting when the CCG's commitment to the scheme has been clarified.

23 CASTLE HOUSE UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Customer Services & External Communications which sought to appraise Members of improvements in customer experiences one year on from the move to Castle House.

The report set out the main differences between customer experiences at Kelham Hall to Castle House and the enhanced services that were now available. It was also reported that 8 partners had co-located to Castle House and these were listed at paragraph 3.1.

Members all agreed that the move to Castle House had been a success and that access to services for both the public and elected Members was much improved.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) an annual update report be presented to the Committee.

24 ENERGY & HOME SUPPORT SERVICE UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing & Safeguarding which provided an update on the Warm Homes on Prescription Scheme and outlined other funding opportunities being explored by the Council’s Energy and Home Support Team to continuously improve the service offer for vulnerable fuel poor households in the private sector.

The report set out the aims of the Council-led Nottinghamshire Warm Homes on Prescription (WHOP) and that the number of referred administered for the previous year had been 234. It also stated that despite the prolonged hot weather, which had had a significant impact on the number of WHOP enquiries, the Council had already spent and committed almost a third of its 2018/2019 Better Care Fund WHOP budget. Paragraph 2.5 of the report provided information about the Government’s new ECO 3 Scheme and the expanded role that local authorities will be delivering. Appendix B outlined the current and proposed services being developed by the Energy & Homes Support Team.

AGREED (unanimously) that the progress made with the Warm Homes on Prescription Scheme and the range of funding opportunities being explored by Newark & Sherwood District Council’s Energy & Home Support Team be noted.

25 FORWARD PLAN - SEPTEMBER 2018 TO AUGUST 2019

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of some of the items that would be submitted to the Homes & Communities Committee over the course of the next twelve months.

The Chairman requested that Members put forward any items they would wish to see included. These were as follows:

Gladstone House Update Report

The Chairman advised that in relation to the Better Care Facility in Ollerton a bid for funding was to be made to Homes England within the week. Work was also ongoing in relation to going out to tender for possible contractors.

AGREED (unanimously) that

- (a) the Forward Plan be noted; and

- (b) an update report in relation to Gladstone House be added to the Forward Plan.

26 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That, under section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 7 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

None

Meeting closed at 6.55 pm.

Chairman