

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, 14 January 2019 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 Mrs S Michael, Councillor N Mison, Councillor N Mitchell and Councillor Mrs P Rainbow

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor P Duncan

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor M Buttery (Committee Member), Councillor Mrs S Saddington (Committee Member) and Councillor Mrs S Soar (Committee Member)

39 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.

40 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

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

41 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2018

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

42 GLADSTONE HOUSE - EXTRA CARE SCHEME UPDATE

The Committee considered the joint report of the Director – Governance & Organisational Development (formerly Director – Safety) (NSDC) and the Director – Newark and Sherwood Homes which sought to provide Members with a review of the operation of the Gladstone House Extra Care Scheme since it opened in April 2018.

The report set out the background to the decision to build and provide the facility and how the scheme was run. It provided information as to the Co-Operation Agreement between the District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) and that Newark and Sherwood Homes provided the housing management and repairs service to all the units. Paragraph 3 of the report provided the Committee with information as to the operation; utilisation; community facilities and costs at the facility.

The Group Manager – Strategic Commissioning (NCC) was in attendance at the meeting and advised Members as to the County's role at the facility. She advised that not all of the 40 units that the County had nomination rights to were occupied. Some

of the tenants initially placed at the facility had complex needs and unfortunately it had not been possible for those needs to be met. Subsequently the placement criteria had been amended and it was now believed that an appropriate mix of tenants were in residence. This, in turn, had led to a significant reduction in the needs that warranted assistance from the facility's staff. The Group Manager also confirmed that a review of costs would be undertaken following the facility having been operational for a full 12 months. In response to a query raised about the availability of apartments used as assessment units for patients being discharged from hospital, the Group Manager confirmed that the County had 8 such units available at the facility.

A Member raised concerns about the cost of providing some of the community facilities at Gladstone House, i.e. the café and beauty therapy services, and the discrepancy between the costs originally estimated and the actual income being received for these services. In response, the Director (NSH) advised that the costs were being kept under review.

In considering the County Council's number of voids Members queried what initiatives were being formulated to improve on this. The Group Manager advised that the changes already made to the placement criteria was making a positive difference in reducing the number of voids, but also that a 'culture change' was needed to persuade older people to consider a move to supported accommodation earlier, in preparation for when they required it, rather than waiting until a crisis arose that required their immediate rehousing. She explained that there was much evidence to demonstrate that this approach was key to helping people to sustain independent living in their own homes longer, before needing residential care.

In summing up, the Chairman commented that the Committee were fully supportive of the facility and would continue its role as a 'critical friend' in order to assist with its continued success.

AGREED (unanimously) that the information provided as part of the operational review of Gladstone House be noted.

#### 43 HOMES & COMMUNITIES REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Financial Services in relation to the budget and scales of fees and charges for those areas falling under the remit of the Homes & Communities Committee for 2019/2020.

The report set out that the budget and medium term financial plan had been developed to reflect, in financial form, the corporate priorities of the Council. Paragraph 3.0 of the report provided the Committee with the major variances between the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 budgets. These included: Housing Options; Strategic Housing; ICT; Payment & Receipts; Customer Services; Licensing Administration; Community Safety, ASB, Domestic Violence & Emergency Planning; CCTV; Energy & Home Support; and Grants & Concessions. The level of fees and charges were contained within Appendix C to the report.

In considering the report Members asked a number of questions about specific entries in the Committee's budget. These were in relation to the Community Hub Services provided at the Southwell Library; Housing Options; and ICT. The Director – Governance & Organisational Development and Business Manager provided Members with the information requested.

The Deputy Leader of the Council stated that the revised way of budget reporting was to be welcomed as it simplified the process and removed any uncertainty. Members agreed that they would wish to have sight of budget reports earlier in the Committee cycle and that they should be included on the Committee's Forward Plan.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the final Committee budget shown at Appendix A to the report be recommended to the Policy & Finance Committee at its meeting to be held on 21 February 2019 for inclusion in the overall Council budget; and
- (b) the scale of fees and charges as shown at Appendix C to the report be recommended to the Policy & Finance Committee at its meeting to be held on 21 February 2019 and Council on 7 March 2019.

#### 44 FIRE SAFETY - JOINT WORKING AGREEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Governance & Organisational Development (formerly Director – Safety) which sought to advise Members of the changes to Fire Safety Regulation and Enforcement as introduced by the Nottinghamshire Housing Authorities and Nottingham Fire & Rescue Services (NFRS) Joint Working Agreement. The report sought the approval of Members to adopt the enforcement strategy.

The report set out that the sometimes complex enforcement of the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 placed on both Local Housing Authorities and Fire & Rescue Authorities had prompted the establishment of a joint working party which had been tasked with exploring opportunities to revise existing working practices. This had led to the development of the Nottinghamshire Joint Working Agreement, the purpose of which was to deliver Safer Communities by the adoption of a robust, effective and consistent approach to the regulation of fire safety across Nottinghamshire. Paragraph 3.0 of the report advised the Committee of the proposals for consideration.

In considering the report a Member sought clarification on which authority had responsibility for Housing In Multiple Occupation (HIMO), specifically 5 storeys and below. The Assistant Business Manager – Environmental Health advised that the Local Housing Authority would take the lead with mandatory consultation with the Nottingham Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS). This was to ensure a single point of contact.

Members noted that paragraph 2.4 of the report referred to an innovative trial of a national data sharing case management system (ECINS) and queried whether the findings of the trial could be reported back to Committee. The Assistant Business Manager confirmed that the results would be shared with the Committee.

Members raised concerns about residents of HIMOs being able to evacuate their building should there be a fire as was the case in the Grenfell fire in 2017. It was noted that issues of these type would be raised with the NFRS. The Assistant Business Manager confirmed that one of the first stages of the agreement would be to launch the agreement at a strategic and officer level to give confidence in its effectiveness. She also confirmed that the ECINS was fundamental to its success.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the adoption of the Joint Working Agreement for Nottinghamshire Housing Authorities and Nottingham Fire & Rescue Services be approved;
- (b) the trial of the ECINS database for cases relating to vulnerable people at risk of fires within their home be supported; and
- (c) the data sharing agreement to facilitate the sharing and processing of information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations be approved.

#### 45 NEWARK AND SHERWOOD HOMES - ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Governance & Organisational Development (formerly Director – Safety) which sought Members’ approval for the adoption of the Annual Delivery Plan with Newark and Sherwood Homes (the Company) for the financial year covering 2019/2020.

The report set out that the Management Agreement was the overarching legal agreement between the Council and the Company and that one of its requirements was that an Annual Delivery Plan was formulated and agreed. The Delivery Plan detailed the main activities, standards or targets of the Company’s operations for each financial year set against the Council’s strategic priorities, its housing vision and outcomes and the need to sustain a viable Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. The final draft Delivery Plan for 2019/2020 was attached as Appendix A to the report and had been approved by its Board for submission to the Council for its consideration. In presenting the report the Director suggested that Members may wish to consider two further topics for inclusion in the list of main activities, these being: procurement (jointly with the Council if appropriate); and the review of temporary accommodation, a report on which was due to be presented to Committee in March 2019).

In considering the report a Member suggested that he would wish to see inclusion of how Newark & Sherwood District Council and Newark and Sherwood Homes would respond to severe weather conditions, citing the issues that residents of De Lacy Court had experienced the previous year. In response, other Members advised that

Nottinghamshire County Council had a register of vulnerable areas where a team of operatives could be deployed in such circumstances to assist with the clearing of the highway. It was also noted that some County Councillors had used their individually allocated fund to purchase grit bins for residents in such areas.

A Member raised the issue of current vacant units at the Seven Hills Sheltered Accommodation and whether this was due to them not being fit for purpose. The Director confirmed that the 13 units had been previously decommissioned as they had not been required. However, circumstances had now changed and these would be referred to in the aforementioned temporary accommodation report coming to Committee in March 2019.

AGREED (with 8 votes for and 1 abstention) that the 2019/2020 draft Annual Delivery Plan for the Council's housing company, Newark and Sherwood Homes, be approved for implementation, subject to the inclusion of Procurement and Review of Temporary Accommodation in the main activities.

#### 46 PUBLIC SPACE CCTV UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Governance & Organisational Development (formerly Director – Safety) which sought to provide Members with an update on the current and future issues facing the public space CCTV system within the District.

The report provided details of relevant legislation; governance; assets held; stakeholders involvement; performance; finances; and the future risks and opportunities with the proposals for Edwinstowe and Winthorpe Road being listed in paragraph 3.0 of the report.

In considering the report Members noted that there were only currently 4 re-deployable cameras available and queried whether this was sufficient. In response the Business Manager advised that their primary use was to deter anti-social behaviour (ASB). If incidents of ASB were identified in a specific area the cameras were installed for a period of 6 months. There were cost implications for their use in relation to installation and the transfer of the data.

The report referred to the proposals for the installation of a camera in Edwinstowe following receipt of a petition handed into the Council in October 2018. The Local Ward Member, also a Member of the Committee, advised that the Parish Council was working with local businesses and the Police in the area most affected. However, she noted that it was difficult to measure what type of ASB the installation of a camera would deter.

The Deputy Leader of the Council stated that partnership working with Nottinghamshire County Council had resulted in the cost of installing mounting columns being reduced. Whilst still expensive, the cost was considerably lower than previously. He advised that the Leader of the Council was keen that the use of CCTV would further enhance the Council's Cleaner, Safer, Greener Strategy. He added that specific cameras were being purchased that enabled vehicle number plate recognition

and suggested that, if possible, Members would benefit from a visit to the CCTV control room, adding that this would enable them to see first-hand how the system worked. They would then be well placed to inform their constituents on the functions and capabilities of the service.

In considering whether the use of CCTV acted as a deterrent, a Member of the Committee confirmed, that in her opinion, it did have that affect. A camera had been removed from Winthorpe Road, since which there had been an increase in crime.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the current situation with CCTV provision in the District as set out in the report be noted;
- (b) in relation to the provision of CCTV in Edwinstowe, a fixed CCTV camera, viewed directly from the Control Room, should be installed as detailed in option (a) of 3.7 of the report; and
- (c) a response on the preferred approach to CCTV provision be considered for the Winthorpe Road area once the petition had been completed and received by the Council.

#### 47 ENERGY COMPANY OBLIGATION FLEXIBLE ELIGIBILITY FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Governance & Organisational Development (formerly Director – Safety) which sought to inform the Members of a feasibility study currently being undertaken to determine the viability of a programme of works to attract funding to support new gas connections and first time central heating systems to approximately 100 fuel poor private sector dwellings within the District.

The report set out who were the main organisations involved in the study, these being: Affordable Warmth Solutions, Cadent (Gas Network Operator), local authorities and energy companies and the obligations on each of them. Paragraphs 3.0 and 4.0 of the report set out respectively the proposal and implications for the Council with the risks being identified in paragraph 5.0.

In considering the report the Members agreed that it was extremely positive and that they would wish to see other areas identified that may also benefit from the funding, if possible.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) should the feasibility study prove viable, the Council's involvement in the scheme be supported; and
- (c) the intention to submit a Warm Homes Fund bid be supported.

48 ROUGH SLEEPER ESTIMATE 2018

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Governance & Organisational Development (formerly Director – Safety) which sought to inform Members of the 2018 Annual Rough Sleeper Estimate as requested by the Ministry for Housing Communities & Local Government for the District. The report also sought to update Members on the current funding opportunities linked to the Government’s Rough Sleeper Strategy published in August 2018.

The report set out that the Council had chosen to carry out an evidence based estimate on 12 November 2018 with the methodology for this being set out in paragraph 2.6 together with a note of the other organisations who had supported the Council. It was reported that a total of five rough sleepers had been identified which was in line with previous years.

In considering the report Members asked which areas of the District the five individuals had been identified in. They were advised that the majority were located in Newark but that Officers were aware of individuals in the Clipstone area. The Business Manager – Housing, Health & Community Relations advised that Officers were aware that those identified did travel between local authority areas but that the five were mostly located in the District.

Members agreed that the relatively low number of rough sleepers for the area was due to the intervention work undertaken by Officers of the Council who were to be congratulated for their efforts.

AGREED (unanimously) that support be given to the Council’s proactive approach of bidding for funds announced through the various funding streams linked to the Government’s Rough Sleepers Strategy, with financial contributions being made from the Council’s Homelessness Prevention Fund Reserve.

49 HOMELESS REVIEW FINDINGS

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Governance & Organisational Development (formerly Director – Safety) which sought to inform Members as to the current review of homelessness in the District and to outline the initial themes emerging from the review that would shape the new Homelessness Strategy 2019/2023.

The report set out that the Homelessness Act 2002 required local authorities to conduct a review of homelessness and to produce a Homelessness Strategy which set out how homelessness would be tackled in each area. It was noted that the current review would be undertaken jointly with Mansfield and Ashfield District Councils. Paragraph 3.0 of the report set out the methodology for the review with the key themes being set out in paragraph 3.3.

In considering the report a Member queried whether the decommissioned units at Seven Hills would become available again in the future. In response, the Committee were advised that that specific issue would be included in the report to the March meeting of the Committee.

AGREED (unanimously) that the emerging themes from the Homelessness Review and how it would shape the new Homelessness Strategy 2019/2023 be noted.

50 CUSTOMER COMMENTS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Communities & Environment (formerly Director – Customers) which sought to inform Members of the type of customer comments received by the Council.

The report provided a brief outline of the Customer Feedback procedure and gave details on different type of comments. Paragraph 3.0 of the report set out the three stage complaints procedure and gave a summary of the numbers and service areas that comments had been received about between 1 April and 30 November 2018.

In considering the report Members agreed that the low number of customer comments received reflected well on the Council and its performance. Members queried whether it was possible to benchmark the statistics against other comparable local authorities. The Business Manager – Customer Services & Communications advised that this was difficult as each local authority had a different methodology of logging comments received.

It was noted that the business unit for which the majority of comments were received was Waste Management. Members agreed that residents needed more information as to what was and was not acceptable when it came to recycling their household waste.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

51 HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE - VIOLENT INCIDENTS

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Governance & Organisational Development (formerly Director – Safety) which sought to inform Members as to the number of violent and potentially violent incidents affecting the Council and its partners' staff.

Paragraph 3.0 of the report provided a table showing a breakdown of the incidents recorded at Castle House between February and November 2018. It also advised that a sign was now displayed in the reception area advising visitors that aggressive behaviour towards staff was not acceptable. It was also reported that the reception area at Castle House was comprehensively covered by both internal and external CCTV which had proved useful in establishing circumstances after allegations had been disputed by those accused of acting in a violent or aggressive manner.

In considering the report Members queried what, if any, was the follow on action should any visitor warrant an intervention by the Customer Care Officers (CCO). The Business Manager – Customer Services & Communications advised that the CCOs dealt with the security of the building and that the majority of their costs were met by the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP). The Council had a zero tolerance to drugs and alcohol but the partner organisations dealt daily with individuals who had



chaotic lives. If an incident occurred the CCO would then make a decision on whether service provision would be withdrawn. It was reported that only two individuals had been banned from the premises since it had opened and that this had been due to their aggressive behaviour towards the Council's partner organisations.

The Business Manager – Community Safety advised that Officers of the Council had visited an individual's home address, with the Police, to deliver a letter advising that their behaviour was unacceptable. The Deputy Leader of the Council noted that the Council had a corporate responsibility to ensure that staff were safe from harm. The Director reassured Members that the safety of staff was taken extremely seriously and that any individuals who displayed aggression would be entered into the Council's 'At Risk' Register. She added that should the incident be serious enough to warrant a ban from the premises, the individual in question was given information as to how they could continue to access services e.g. via telephone.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted.

52 FORWARD PLAN (FEBRUARY 2019 TO JANUARY 2020)

AGREED that the following addition be made to the Forward Plan for the Homes & Communities Committee between 1 February 2019 and 30 January 2020:

September 2019 – Update on Fire Safety Joint Working Agreement

53 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 7.50 pm.

Chairman