

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, 30 September 2019 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor T Wendels (Chairman)
Councillor R Holloway (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs K Arnold, Councillor M Brock, Councillor Mrs B Brooks,
Councillor Mrs I Brown, Councillor M Brown, Councillor S Carlton,
Councillor L Dales, Councillor L Goff and Councillor Mrs S Saddington

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mrs G Dawn, Councillor Mrs L Hurst and Councillor P Peacock

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor J Lee (Committee Member)

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND AS TO THE PARTY WHIP

Councillor Mrs Dales declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 5 – Update on Flood Prevention Schemes as a representative on the Trent Valley Drainage Board.

Councillor Mrs Holloway declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 9 – Newark and Sherwood Homes- Gas Servicing as a Director of the Board.

17 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

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

18 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10 JUNE 2019

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19 UPDATE ON FLOOD PREVENTION SCHEMES

The Business Manager – Public Protection presented a report to the Committee which sought to update Members on the current position of proposed flood alleviation schemes within the district together with information on the Town and Parish Emergency Resilience Stores.

In relation to the proposed flood alleviation schemes, the report provided details for the areas in: Lowdham; Thurgarton; Gunthorpe; Girton; Sutton-on-Trent; and Southwell. Details of grant monies received since 2015/2016 were listed in paragraph 2.11 of the report together with how the monies had been either spent, committed or uncommitted.

In considering the proposed schemes Members suggested that communication with residents in the aforementioned areas be improved in order to ensure that they were aware of what decisions had been taken and the latest position with any proposed works.

In relation to flood warnings and how Ward Members were notified, the Business Manager advised that it would be beneficial for Members if they downloaded the Environment Agency Flood App as all flood alerts were listed on there. It was also suggested that if the area in question was localised then the Ward Member be contacted directly by Officers of the Council, if practicable.

In relation to the location of the Emergency Resilience Stores, these were listed in paragraph 2.13 of the report with Members being asked to consider four proposals on how they should be maintained in the future. In considering the proposals Members agreed that they would wish to see Option 4 implemented.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the current situation be noted along with the current financial contributions for the schemes; and
- (b) Option 4 for restocking the resilience stores be approved.

20 MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT

The Business Manager – Human Resources & OD presented a report to Members which sought to brief them on the proposed Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement which was to be forwarded to full Council for adoption.

It was reported that the Modern Slavery Act 2015 had come into force on 29 October 2015 and that Section 54 of the Act required organisations that supplied goods or services and had a consolidated global turnover of £36M pa or more to prepare a slavery and human trafficking statement for each financial year. It was noted that although not legally required to publish a statement, the Council had elected to do so as a matter of good practice. Details of the key areas to be included within the statement were listed in paragraph 2.2.1 of the report.

In considering the report Members queried how adoption of the statement would be of benefit to the Council. The Business Manager advised that it would demonstrate to all external organisations of how important the Council viewed the issue of modern slavery and human trafficking.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement be endorsed and forwarded to full Council for adoption.

21 TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION - DEVELOPMENT APPRAISAL

The Business Manager – Housing, Health & Community Relations presented a report which sought to update Members on the progress to appraise the development of a new replacement temporary accommodation facility and also sought approval to progress onto the detailed design stage, details of which were to be presented to Committee in March 2020.

The report set out that the Council were under a statutory duty, as part of the Housing Act 1996, to provide temporary accommodation for all homeless applicants who met the required criteria, noting that this was currently provided at Seven Hills, Quibells Lane, Newark and Wellow Green, Newark Road, Ollerton. It was considered that, despite investment, the facility at Seven Hills was no longer fit for purpose and in order to provide for future demand and long term value for money, should be replaced with a new facility. The project objectives and options for Members' consideration were detailed in paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7 of the report with Option 3 being that recommended to Members for approval.

In response to whether such facilities would be provided in other parts of the district, the Business Manager advised that a review would be undertaken of the existing facility at Wellow Green and of future provision throughout the district.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the proposed option: Option 3 – a new temporary accommodation facility, is to be taken forward onto detailed design stage to be presented to Committee in March 2020 be approved;
- (b) £280,000 be committed for the project from the £1M allocated in the Council's Capital Programme for 2019/20 approved by full Council on 7 March 2019 to enable the Council to procure and appoint a multi-disciplinary design and construction service be approved; and
- (c) alternative design options will continue to explore opportunities for additional affordable housing provision on site be noted.

22 SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATOR

The Business Manager – Housing Strategy & Development presented a report which sought to provide Members with information on the role of the Regulator for Social Housing and the pending changes around consumer regulation.

It was reported that the Council, as landlord of the housing stock, must ensure full compliance with all regulatory requirements as prescribed by the Regulator, even where the housing function or service had been delegated to an Arms' Length Management Organisation. Details of the regulation of social housing were detailed in paragraph 3.0 of the report with the fundamental objectives being noted as economic and consumer, further details of which were provided. Key messages from the recently published Consumer Regulation Review for 2018/2019 were summarised in paragraph 3.14.

In relation to the Housing Ombudsman it was reported that the overall aim was to make a difference – on individual complaints and across the sector with the four new objectives being noted in paragraph 5.5.

In considering the report some Members of the Committee raised a number of concerns in relation to Newark and Sherwood Homes' maintenance of the housing stock, noting that all such issues would be the responsibility of the Council when the service was transferred back in house. It was noted that following the decision of Policy & Finance Committee on 26 September 2019 to return the management of the Council's housing stock back in house, a full governance review would be undertaken to determine how this Committee's remit would be effected. It was further noted that a Newark and Sherwood Homes Performance Review would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee in November 2019.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Council's responsibilities as landlord of the housing stock to the Regulator of Social Housing and Housing Ombudsman be noted; and
- (b) further statutory housing matters relating to compliance, health and safety (including building safety) and regulation be added to the forward plan be approved.

23 NEWARK AND SHERWOOD HOMES - GAS SERVICING

The Director – Governance & Organisational Development presented a report which sought to update Members of two instances that had occurred in recent months regarding failures to undertake timely gas servicing to a number of the Council's properties and to give assurance about the action taken to remedy the situation.

It was reported that Newark and Sherwood Homes (the Company) were legally required to carry out annual gas servicing to all properties with a gas supply. Details of the gas servicing breaches and the actions taken arising therefrom were detailed in paragraph 3.0 of the report. It was clearly stated within the report that all outstanding properties had subsequently been serviced and certificates completed. It was further reported that both the Company and the Council were working closely to develop a plan to ensure that there was no repetition of the events and that the Council had made a self-referral to the Regulator for Social Housing to report the instances of gas servicing breaches. A response had been received from the Regulator on 2 August, confirming that they had found no breach of their consumer standards and that no further action would be taken.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the actions taken by the Company to identify and rectify the cause of the failure to complete a number of gas safety checks in accordance with required times scales be noted; and
- (b) the completion of all required gas safety checks and future assurance actions put in place by the Company be noted.

24 HOMES & COMMUNITIES FORWARD PLAN - OCTOBER 2019 TO SEPTEMBER 2020

AGREED (unanimously) that subject to the inclusion of the Annual CCTV Report being presented to Committee on 20 January 2020, the Forward Plan be noted.

25 TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION - DEVELOPMENT APPRAISAL (EXEMPT APPENDICES)

Agenda Item No. 12 were exempt appendices to Agenda Item No. 7 – Temporary Accommodation – Development Appraisal. No discussions were held in relation to the information contained therein and therefore the Press and Public were not excluded from the meeting.

Meeting closed at 7.15 pm.

Chairman