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HOUSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 10 March 2021
18:00 to 18:55

Present: Councillor J McManus (Chair)

Councillors A Brame J Johnson
J Bird J Robinson
H Cameron M Sullivan
G Davies S Whittingham
I Lewis

Apologies Councillor P Hayes

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Members of the Housing Committee, Officers and viewing members of the public to the online meeting.

2 APOLOGIES

The Chair announced that apologies had been received by Councillor Paul Hayes, and Councillor Helen Cameron was deputising for him.

3 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Committee were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, in connection with any item on the agenda, and to state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

4 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Housing Committee held on 27 January 2021 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

5 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that no questions or statements from members of the public had been submitted.

6 PROPOSAL TO ACQUIRE UNITS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING USE

Members resolved that the Appendix 1 to agenda item 6 (Proposal to acquire units for Affordable Housing Use) contained exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council and other persons of a commercially sensitive nature, as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and that it would be treated as confidential information items during their public consideration by members.

Alan Evans, Director of Regeneration and Place, introduced a report on a proposal to acquire six new properties which would be used to enable the Council to use these properties for those in most need. Under this proposal the Council would add to the existing rental income generated from the Council's current housing stock.

It was noted that as another option for consideration, the Council could allocate funding secured through commuted sums and the Better Care Fund to Registered Providers to support the strategic delivery of these six units as new social sector homes for social rent but would still need to provide some level of funding to enable the homes to be let at social rents. However the Registered Provider would retain ownership of the units and so the Council would not receive any rental income from these units to support the long-term financial plan.

Members commented on the report and thanked the Director of Regeneration and Place and the team involved for the work they had done.

RESOLVED – That Housing Committee requests that Policy and Resources Committee approves the following recommendations:

- (1) The Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, be authorised to negotiate the acquisition of six new social rented housing properties from Lovell Partnerships Ltd and to finalise all necessary associated legal documentation;**
- (2) The Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to enter into negotiations with Lovell Partnerships Ltd to negotiate an enhanced energy efficiency specification which may include the installation of solar photovoltaics for such properties.**

7 **2020/21 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER THREE (APR - DEC)**

Karen Page, Senior Finance Business Partner, introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place that provided a summary of the projected year-end revenue and capital position for Housing Committee as at the end of Quarter 3 of the 2020/21 financial year.

The report noted that the overall financial position of the Council remained challenging, and that a number of actions were in progress to mitigate the overall forecast position presented at Quarter 3, including limited spending to essential areas of service delivery only, with Corporate Directors supported to mitigate the risk of overspending.

RESOLVED – that:

- (1) the favourable year-end forecast position presented at Quarter 3 of £0.234m be noted; and**
- (2) the impact of funding and expenditure as a direct consequence of Covid-19, including the additional funding sources which have been identified, but as yet, not received, be noted.**

8 **LETTER FROM MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES & LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Chair noted that a letter had been sent to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 13 November 2020, signed by the Chair and Conservative and Liberal Democrat Spokespersons of the Housing Committee regarding Leaseholder Reform. A response was received on 4 February 2021.

The Chair noted that since sending the letter, an all party Parliamentary group had been set up and that she had also written to this group and would update members when a response was received.

Members noted that the response from MHCLG was disappointing in that it did not fully address the position of current occupants of leasehold properties. The consensus of the meeting was that a further response should be sent to the MHCLG.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) the letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government be noted; and**
- (2) the Chair of the Committee be authorised to provide a response to the MHCLG expressing the Committee’s thoughts on the matter.**

9 HOUSING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members gave consideration to a report of the Director Regeneration and Place that set out the proposed Housing Committee Work Programme 2020/21 as detailed in the appendix to the report.

The report advised that the Housing Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were within the remit of the Committee.

The report provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

The director of Regeneration and Place noted that a workshop needed to be set-up before the end of the municipal year to discuss the budget saving proposal. The Chair agreed that Party Spokespersons and Cllr Davies would attend the workshop.

RESOLVED – That the Housing Committee Work Programme for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year be noted.