

HOUSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2 March 2022

Present: Councillor J McManus (Chair)

Councillors A Brame A Gardner
P Martin I Lewis
T Smith H Gorman
H Cameron

Deputies: Councillors B Berry (In place of M Collins)
S Foulkes (In place of S Whittingham)

36 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

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

37 APOLOGIES

The Chair confirmed the apologies of Councillors M Collins, J Robinson and S Whittingham with Councillor B Berry Deputising for Councillor Collins and Councillor S Foulkes deputising for Councillor Whittingham.

38 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No such declarations were made.

39 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the Housing Committee held on 27 January 2022 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

40 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that no public questions had been received, nor were there any statements or petitions.

41 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION TENANCY STRATEGY 2022-25

The Strategic Housing Services Senior Manager introduced a report that sought the approval from Members of the Housing Committee for the Liverpool City Region Tenancy Strategy 2022-25.

The report noted that Wirral Council was required to have a Tenancy Strategy under the Localism Act 2011 and that the Strategy needed to be reviewed regularly. The Strategy was informed and developed through consultation with all Liverpool City Region local authorities, the Sub-Regional Property Pool Plus Steering and all Registered Providers of social housing with stock in the Liverpool City Region.

Members asked a range of questions on the Voluntary Right to Buy, Affordable Rent, the effects of local and national politics, due regard of Registered Providers and Affordable Housing.

Resolved – That:

- 1. The Liverpool City Region Tenancy Strategy 2022-25 set out in Appendix One, subject to the unanimous agreement of each Liverpool City Region Local Authority through their corresponding approval processes be approved; and**
- 2. Should any minor amendments be required to the Strategy as a result of these approval processes, the Director of Regeneration and Place be given delegated authority to approve those amendments on behalf of Wirral Council.**

42 SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME (PROPERTY POOL PLUS)

The Property Pool Plus Manager introduced a report that sought approval for Wirral's continued participation in a Liverpool City Region sub regional social housing allocations scheme, a final revised Allocations Policy and support for the introduction of a new IT system.

The report noted that under case law and good practice, it was necessary to periodically update and review the current iterations of the Council's Allocations Policy and Scheme.

Members thanked officers for the report and in particular noted how useful the summary of current policy position alongside the proposed changes were.

Members asked questions on the rationale for changes to the policy on arrears, a national consultation on domestic abuse victims being able to move to an area they have no connection to, how a person might be considered to be a "person lacking mental capacity", and temporary and supported accommodation.

At this point the Chair, Councillor J McManus left the chamber. Vice Chair, Councillor A Brame took over for the duration of the meeting.

Resolved – That:

- 1. The proposed Allocations policy and scheme as set out in Appendix A of the report be approved;**
- 2. Support be given for the implementation of the new scheme to coincide with the procurement of a suitable IT system, which would be needed to support the operation of the new policy and scheme;**
- 3. The commencement of the tender process for the procurement of the provision of the IT software system be approved.**
- 4. The Head of Housing be authorised to award the contract within approved budget and to the highest scoring tender within approved budget and in accordance with the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) criteria.**
- 5. The Head of Housing be authorised to enter into arrangements with the other participating local authorities (Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool and Sefton), to govern the implementation and future operation of the allocations scheme, including the appointment of a Property Pool Plus Co-ordinator to work across all local authority areas.**

43 TENDER FOR THE HOME ADAPTATIONS LIFTING SOLUTIONS CONTRACT

The Strategic Housing Services Senior Manager introduced a report that sought approval to commence a procurement exercise to secure a contract for a range of lifting and other equipment to enable disabled and vulnerable residents to remain living independently in their homes. This would be a 5-year contract with an estimated value of £6.2m.

The report noted that the Council had a statutory duty to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants and over several years had delivered this assistance and also developed discretionary assistance to enable adults and children to remain living at home.

The existing contract for lifting solutions had been in place since 1st July 2018 and would cease on 31st May 2022. The Council had the option to extend this contract for 6 months to allow sufficient time to review contract options and re-tender which would require a minimum of 3-6 months.

Members asked questions on alternative options considered and using multiple contractors.

Resolved – That:

- 1. The Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to extend the current contract for lifting solutions and other equipment to enable disabled and vulnerable residents within Wirral to live independently within their homes (“the Services”) for a further 6 months from the current expiry date of 31 May 2022; and**
- 2. The proposed procurement process and strategy for the appointment of a tenderer to carry out the Services as set out at paragraph 3.7 of the report be approved; and**
- 3. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Place to award the contract for the Services within approved budget and to the highest scoring tenderer and in accordance with the Most Economically Advantageous Tender criteria.**

44 HOUSING QUARTER 3 MONITOR

The Senior Finance Manager introduced a report that provided a summary of the projected year-end revenue and capital position for Housing Committee as at the end of Quarter 3 (to December 2021) of the 2021/22 financial year. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance to enable the Committee to take ownership of their specific budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

Members asked a range of questions on compulsory purchase monies, the order that financial items are dealt with on committee agendas and selective licensing.

Resolved – That:

- 1. The projected year-end revenue forecast variance of £0.059m favourable position as reported at quarter 3 (Oct-Dec) of 2021-22 be noted;**
- 2. Progress on the achievement of approved savings and the projected year-end forecast position at quarter 3 (Oct-Dec) of 2021-22 be noted;**
- 3. The reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments be noted; and**
- 4. The projected year-end capital forecast expenditure position of £7.669m as reported at quarter 3 (Oct-Dec) of 2021-22 be noted.**

45 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Members gave consideration to a report of the Director of Regeneration and Place that set out the proposed Housing Committee Work Programme 2021/22 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.

Members raised a number of items that had been raised previously to be looked at by Housing Committee. These included Council Housing, finding land and Homes England. Members asked for assurances that these would still be looked at in future as this was likely to be the last Housing Committee before the committees were re-structured for 2022-23.

Resolved – That the Housing Committee Work Programme for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year be noted.