

Housing, Economy and Business Committee**29 January 2019****HOUSING, ECONOMY AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE****29 January 2019 at 7.30 pm**

MEMBERS: Councillor Jayne McCoy (Chair), Councillor David Bartolucci (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Trish Fivey, Jake Short, Sam Weatherlake, Eric Allen, Catherine Gray, David Hicks, Nick Mattey and Jean Crossby (substitute for Councillor Joyce Melican)

ABSENT Councillor(s) Joyce Melican

31. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Councillor Jayne McCoy, welcomed those present to the meeting.

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joyce Melican for whom Councillor Jean Crossby was substituting.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**6. Housing Rents and Related Charges 2019/20.**

Councillor Jake Short, Non Pecuniary, Council appointment to the Carshalton Coronation Commemoration Trust.

34. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2018 be agreed as an accurate record.

35. HOUSING, ECONOMY AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Jennifer Sibley, Environment Strategy Manager, briefly presented the report.

RESOLVED: that:

1. The update from the HEB performance monitoring session on the 15 November 2018 be noted.
2. The proposal for future performance monitoring (as set out at paragraph 4.4) be endorsed.

36. HOUSING RENTS AND RELATED CHARGES 2019/20

Trevor Hart, Housing Strategy and Commissioning Manager, presented the report.

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Following the presentation, Members enquired as to whether a further breakdown of costs could be provided by Sutton Housing Partnership, which the Housing Strategy and Commissioning Manager would seek to share.

Members particularly discussed the Independent Living Service, increases in energy supplier costs and the size of garages compared to the 'modern vehicle' (meaning they are often used for storage rather than parking). Following a question on water meters, the Assistant Director - Housing committed to confirm current legal requirements to members.

Finally, the chair raised the issue of '53 Mondays' in the coming year (as per Paragraph 4.4) and the Deputy Assistant Director - Resources (Business Services) updated the committee that mitigatory options were being explored, should the national provision not change. The Deputy Assistant Director committed to send a briefing to members once further information was known.

RESOLVED: that

1. Council dwelling rents be decreased by 1%, in line with the requirements of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.
2. Garage rents be increased by £1 pw to £13.50 pw and parking space rents by 50p pw to £3.35 pw.
3. Charges for heating and hot water be increased by 5%, to reflect anticipated future costs of supply.
4. Charges for estate services be increased by a maximum of 2.4% (CPI at September 2018) per property until they have reached an amount at which full cost recovery is achieved.
5. The charge for the Independent Living Service be maintained at £14.60 pw.
6. Rents be increased for specialist HRA properties as proposed in paragraph 4.13;
7. Charges for the non-HRA dwellings be increased as proposed in paragraph 4.14;
8. It be recommended to the Carshalton Coronation Commemoration Trust that the rents of the properties leased to it are reduced by 1% in line with the reduction for council housing rents.
9. Charges for the pitches at The Pastures Traveller site be decreased by 1.02% in order to continue their relationship with council rents locally.

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10. Charges for ancillary services provided to occupants of non-HRA temporary accommodation be increased to the amounts as set out in the table under paragraph 4.18.

Under Standing Order 15.4, Councillor Nick Mattey requested that his abstention from the vote, with regards to recommendation 2.3, be recorded in the minutes.

37. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF THE ROUNDSHAW ESTATE

Trevor Hart, Housing Strategy and Commissioning Manager, briefly presented the report and Chair welcomed guests Angelique Banton and Kim Adams (Metropolitan Thames Valley), Pat Bridgeman (Flightpath Residents' Association) and Ward Councillor Ed Joyce (Roundshaw Community Network).

Following a contribution from Metropolitan Thames Valley, Members discussed anti-social behaviour, and in particular, approaches to tackling domestic violence. Attention was also given by the committee to a reported increase in complaints and potential for improved service delivery, as reviewed on a monthly basis. Members requested from Metropolitan Thames Valley that further information be circulated on 'stage 1' and 'stage 2' complaints.

Contributions were then invited from Roundshaw Community Network and the Flightpath Residents' Association. Highlighted in particular were support from Metropolitan Thames Valley, anti-social behaviour and violent crime, community safety, the quality of service vis-à-vis repairs (including call-waiting times) and other local issues.

In debate, Members further explored the potential for proactive resident engagement on the estate, particularly in light of a reduced number of residents' associations, and concerns over repairs. Members requested that the issues of engagement, performance indicators / process explanation relating to the contact centre, and levels of satisfaction following repairs be included in any future update. The Chair suggested that a letter be sent from the Committee, addressing the concerns expressed, to Metropolitan Thames Valley.

RESOLVED: that the progress on delivering on the compact be noted.

38. DELIVERY OF PHASE 2 OF THE HRA NEW BUILD PROGRAMME

Gill Daw, Head of Housing Enabling and Development, presented the report.

In debate, Members particularly discussed the financial implications of the report, including a potential requirement to purchase land and cost per unit. In response to a question, the Head of Housing Enabling and Development confirmed that the bid had been for 196 units, while brief explanation was given on relevant planning policy by Simon Latham, Assistant Director - Housing, Planning and Regeneration.

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Following member enquiry, officers responded that none of the sites envisaged in this programme particularly lend themselves to modular housing but referred to a London Councils' initiative related to 'meanwhile sites'. An approximate timescale of 12 to 18 months build time was given, dependent on planning permission and commencing in 2020.

RESOLVED: that

1. Authority be delegated to the Strategic Director of Environment Housing and Regeneration, in conjunction with Strategic Director of Resources, to enable delivery of a further phase of new build council housing, up to a value of £25m.
2. Authority be delegated to the Strategic Director of Environment Housing and Regeneration, in conjunction with Strategic Director of Resources, to enter into any associated grant or funding agreements and contracts to deliver this phase, subject to meeting prudential rules for borrowing in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

39. COUNCIL TAX EMPTY DWELLING DISCOUNTS

Julie Turner, Deputy Assistant Director (Resources - Business Services) presented the report.

Members enquired whether those concerned by long-term medical needs were exempt from the recommendations. The Head of Revenues and Benefits confirmed that an exemption applied to a property where the last occupier had moved into residential care on a permanent basis but the exemption did not apply if a move to a residential home was temporary. This was defined by legislation and was not a local decision. Clarification was provided by the Deputy Assistant Director as to the application of the recommendations.

Members asked whether any discount would be passed onto students renting properties but officers responded that this premium would not extend to circumstances where a property, is for example, unoccupied over summer provided a tenancy covered that period. The exemption would cease from the date the course end and if students decided to remain in the house beyond the course end date they would be liable to pay the full council tax charge

Reassurance was provided by the officers that quality would be monitored and the Chair suggested potential for update in a year's time.

RESOLVED: that

1. The removal of the 10% discount currently awarded on properties that are empty but have been left furnished be agreed with effect from 1 April 2019.
2. The premium payable on long term empty properties (empty for longer than two years) be increased from 50% to 100% with effect from 1 April 2019.

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3. The premium payable on long term empty properties (empty for longer than five years) be increased from 100% to 200% with effect from 1 April 2020.
4. The premium payable on long term empty properties (empty for longer than ten years) be increased from 200% to 300% with effect from 1 April 2021.

40. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2019/20

Julie Turner, Deputy Assistant Director (Resources - Business Services) presented the report, explicitly highlighting the Equalities Impact Assessment, which should be considered when making the decisions on the recommendations in this report.

Members discussed the mistake of referring to RPI vs CPI in the consultation and officers referred to legal advice that had been sought, confirming the Council's clear and obvious intention was to provide for a 3% inflation increase for 2019/20.

RESOLVED: that

1. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme is revised and the Income Bands are uplifted by 3% with effect from 1 April 2019 as set out in Appendix A, table 2.
2. The Council undertakes a further consultation exercise on the proposed inflation indexation principle to be adopted for the financial year commencing 1 April 2020 as set out in paragraph 6.7 of the report.
3. The Council adopts an upper limit of 5% inflation increase that may be applied in any future years.

41. DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATE RELIEF SCHEME 2019/20 AND 2020/21

Mark Halls, Head of Revenues and Benefits, presented the report.

Members discussed the operation of the business rate relief and also its application to charity shops. In response, the Head of Revenues and Benefits confirmed that rate relief to charity shops came from central government, agreeing to provide further information to members. Members further discussed rates avoidance as a national issue as well as potential for targeted / discretionary rate relief. Officers also informed committee as to the different means of promoting rate relief.

RESOLVED: that

1. Option 2, which revises the Revaluation Local Business Rate Relief Scheme to take into account the reduced level of funding for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years, be agreed.

2. The details of the new Small Business Rate Relief scheme be noted.

42. ANY URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent business was raised. However, the Chair and Committee gave their thanks to the Deputy Assistant Director - Resources (Business Services) for her service as she would shortly be leaving the Council.

The meeting ended at 9.57 pm

Chair:

Date: