

Runnymede Borough CouncilHousing CommitteeThursday, 12 September 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Smith (Chair), R Davies (Vice-Chair), MK Cressey, J Furey, T Gracey, S Jenkins, P Mehta, G Moudgil, C Parry and S Lewis (Substitute) (In place of C Howorth).

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors C Howorth.

14 Notifications of Changes to Committee Membership

Cllr S. Lewis substituted for Cllr C. Howorth.

15 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 June 2024 were held to be correct subject to an 'r' being added to 'officers.'

It was clarified that if members had questions about specific numbers raised during the meeting, or wished for more detail on a particular report, they were welcome to email officers.

16 Apologies for Absence

None.

17 Declarations of Interest

None.

18 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

A presentation on the draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy was given to members outlining the purpose and process that led to the new strategy. Results from the engagement exercise were shared. This focused on housing concerns of residents of the borough of which, 43% believed that private rent was expensive.

Objectives of the strategy were outlined. These included:

1. Focus on intervention and prevention
2. Provide holistic support to those experiencing rough sleeping and those with complex needs
3. Maximise 'move on' options
4. Work with partners to secure positive and sustained outcomes

The Chair thanked the officer for the accessibility of the report and members were asked to approve the six-week consultation period on the above objectives.

Questions were asked around the process for individuals who could not or would not engage with the preventative measures put in place. A multi-agency approach would be

used in this case to support the individual where they currently were. If an individual was found to be homeless but not from Runnymede, efforts would be made to make connections with the area they were from. In response to an anticipated increase in those in need of support, it was explained that various methods of support would be publicised to residents through electronic, paper and in person methods.

It was resolved that:

Members approved the six-week consultation on the Council's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

19 **Building Safety Report**

The Building Safety Policy was outlined to members. This policy was created to comply with the Building Safety Act, 2022 which applies to buildings that are eighteen metres high. Therefore, the policy would apply to Surrey Towers only. The Act put more stringent fire safety procedures in place, and a greater emphasis on engaging with residents. An eight week period was chosen to ensure that as many residents as possible could be contacted through electronic, paper and in person means as possible.

It was clarified that the Council was only responsible for the buildings it owned that are over eighteen metres. Responsibility for privately owned buildings that were over eighteen metres would fall to the owner of the building.

Questions were raised about the definition of a competent contractor. It was explained that competency was assessed through KPIs which would be assessed monthly.

It was resolved that:

Members approved the eight-week consultation with professional stakeholders and residents on the new Building Safety Policy.

20 **Hoarding Policy**

The hoarding policy was outlined to members. This outlined the need to have a person focused strategy, which involved a multi-agency approach and used a nationally recognised clutter scale so agencies would understand the ratings when shared. It was confirmed that mental health professionals would be involved in the consultation. Environmental services would be consulted, they support hoarders within the private sector and would have a similarly empathetic approach.

It was resolved that:

Members approved a four-week consultation with residents and stakeholders on a draft Housing Hoarding Policy.

21 **KPI Report**

The KPI report was outlined for members. It was acknowledged that the contractor was still underperforming due to a lack of experienced staff, and that they had been given permission to appoint subcontractors to help them meet contract timescales. It was acknowledged that whilst the homes not meeting the decent homes standard had increased considerably, this was a result of a number of components within the homes

reaching their renewal date. Similarly, whilst the number of complaints not met within the stated time was high, this was partly due to the complexity of the complaint. However, residents were likely to have been contacted during this time and it was hoped that the new corporate complaints system would lead to more consistent approach in recording time extensions where the complainant has agreed due to ongoing dialogue or investigations.

In answer to a question on the complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman and the expected responses, it was stated that there was currently a twelve to eighteen month wait due to a backlog. Similarly, the H5 data was explained by a 50% vacancy rate within the current service. H2 was also the area of the contractor who had been allowed to subcontract to help improve this KPI.

22 Procurement Update

The existing procurements were outlined to members. These were intended to help improve the housing stock. It was expected that procurement spending would remain stable until 2028/9 when it would decrease. It was confirmed that the processes mandated under procurement legislation were followed and that the legal team were consulted regularly. It was confirmed that closed tender was not used regularly in comparison to open and legislative tender which was the preferred route. It was confirmed that it was government legislation that stated that a tender above £25k must be advertised on the contract finder portal. Tenders would be evaluated on both quality and price. The initial evaluation on the quality questions would be completed first by a panel without knowledge of the tender prices so that opinions were not impacted by knowledge of cost. The scores would then be combined to give an overall position.

23 Exclusion of press and public

24 S106 Housing Developments

The S106 Housing Developments report was outlined to members. Members congratulated the Housing department on the deal it had been able to achieve. Debate centred around deferring recommendation four to approve the level of rent to a future committee rather than delegated authority however there is limited scope for rent setting and as the handover of the property and the procurement of a valuation of market rents to enable Affordable Rent setting will need to be done just prior to handover this may fall outside the Committee timetable and delay rent setting and letting of properties. Committee has previously approved a Rent setting Policy which will be applied. It was asked if the proposed thirteen units would be allocated to people in Temporary Accommodation and was confirmed that it would be people from TA or the Housing Register Such units could come into the Council's possessions by late 2025, early 2026.

It was agreed that recommendations one, two, three and five would be voted on together, and four would be voted on separately.

It was resolved that:

1. A budget was agreed to purchase the 13 affordable housing units, secured under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The purchase of affordable housing units was secured under agreements made pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This is an option that is permitted under the Housing Development Strategy adopted by the Council.

3. A Clerk of Works and Employers Agent was appointed to support the purchase. A

procurement exercise was authorised to obtain an individual or entity to discharge this function.

4. Authority be delegated to the Corporate Head of Housing, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Housing Committee, to determine the rent levels for this scheme.

5. The tenure mix be in accordance with any planning permission that is granted.

(The meeting ended at 9.24 pm.)

Chair