

Runnymede Borough CouncilHousing CommitteeWednesday, 10 January 2024 at 7.00 pm

Members of the Council present: Councillors M Nuti (Chair), J Hulley (Vice-Chair), MK Cressey, S Dennett, R King, I Mullens, M Smith and S Williams.

Members of the Council absent: Councillors M Darby and N Prescott.

In attendance: Councillors .

**58 Notifications of Changes to Committee Membership**

None

**59 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 November 2023 were signed as correct.

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 December 2023 were signed as correct.

**60 Apologies for Absence**

None.

**61 Declarations of Interest**

None.

**62 Tenant Satisfaction Survey - Presentation by Acuity**

The Committee received a presentation from Acuity on the results from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey. The Committee thanked officers for their presentation.

The Interim Corporate Head of Housing explained that whilst the results were far from where they were desired to be, the issues raised were ones that the department was already endeavouring to address. They outlined the primary causes of dissatisfaction revolved around the condition of internal and external communal areas; day to day repairs services; delays in planned works; the way in which contacts are dealt with; a lack of knowledge or understanding of the Council's role and procedures and poor management of expectations. She pointed members to the action plan laid out in Appendix A which was designed to improve this.

Members asked if it would be possible for the overall satisfaction data to be broken down into wards so that a more targeted approach could be taken to address resident dissatisfaction, and if a simplified version of the results could be shared with tenants. Both of which were agreed to be investigated.

**63 Policies for Estate Improvement**

The Interim Corporate Head of Housing reported that, following the draft Estate Improvement policy being brought to June's Committee requesting permission to consult tenants on improvements, no responses had been received. Therefore, members were asked to approve the Estate Improvement Policy to allow improvements outside of the usual reactive and planned maintenance programme. Members praised officers for the policy and agreed to its implementation.

**Resolved that:**

**The Estate Improvement Policy be approved.**

**64 Housing Revenue Account Estimates**

The Corporate Head of Finance outlined the Housing Revenue Account estimates for 2024/25. He explained the variances in the current financial year could be attributed to the Parkside scheme, central heating, the Decent Homes programmes and changes in the contributions into the Major Repairs reserve. This had led to an additional cost of £117,000 in the current year. This meant that the estimated HRA balance at the end of the year was expected to be £35.6 million compared to the £23.6 million originally forecast. This would reduce the following year as the programmes caught up.

The major works programme for the following year would total £9.3 million and would include major upgrades to central heating, kitchens and bathrooms, roofing and various other works that were required to comply with the Decent Homes Standard. There would therefore be insufficient funds in the Major Repairs Reserve the following year, which would require a further transfer from the HRA balances.

The next section on debt charges and depreciation was noted, with the next repayment of HRA loans in 2027 forecast to be met from a combination of set aside receipts and HRA reserve. It was also proposed to transfer £30,000 of HRA funds to top up the Discretionary Housing Payment pot for which Secretary of State permission would be sought.

Proposed fees, charges and rent levels for the following year were discussed. The Regulator for Social Housing has confirmed that the maximum rent increase limit allowable would revert to CPI + 1%. CPI in September was 6.7% meaning the Council can increase rent by up to 7.7%. This would be applied from April 2024, and would also apply to rents for mobile home pitches and the services charges paid by the Council' Independent Retirement tenants. Rents paid for properties bought under the shared ownership scheme would be subject to a 5.8% increase based on the November RPI + 0.5%.

**Recommended to Full Council that:**

**The draft revenue estimates for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A be approved as submitted, and the Full Council was requested to make provisions accordingly.**

**Resolved that:**

**The proposed changes in rents and charges (including those for Housing General Fund services) for 2024/25, as set out in pages 47-49 of the Estimates, be approved to be effective either from the first rent week of April 2024, or 1 April 2024 as appropriate**

**65 Service Area Plan 2024-2025**

The Interim Corporate Head of Housing outlined the Service Area Plan, which proposed the work streams and priorities for the Housing Business unit over the following calendar year. There are six areas to the Housing Business unit which meets monthly to ensure all

members are aware of the department's priorities. The Interim Corporate Head of Housing outlined the priorities for the following financial year, which would focus on investing in additional IT functionality to improve customer satisfaction; continuing five housing development projects; the continuation of completing works that met the Decent Homes Standard and tenancy management.

Other areas that were mentioned but not at the level of a corporate project were: the review of the IRL manager role; production of a tenant incentive scheme; council heating plan; tree surveys; and starting the review of the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

Members were asked to approve the Service Area Plan for 2024/25.

**Resolved that:**

**The Service Area Plan for Housing be approved.**

66 **Exclusion of press and public**

(The meeting ended at 8.02 pm.)

Chair