

## Runnymede Borough Council

### Housing Committee

Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 7.00pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Nuti (Chairman), J Hulley (Vice-Chairman), MK Cressey, R King, L Gillham (In place of I Mullens), R Bromley (In place of N Prescott), S Whyte (In place of M Smith) and T Gates (In place of S Williams).

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor S. Dennett, Councillor M. Darby.

In attendance: Councillors P Snow and MD Cressey.

#### 1. Notification to changes to Committee Membership

Cllr. S. Whyte substituted for Cllr M. Smith, Cllr T. Gates substituted for Cllr S. Williams, Cllr R. Bromley substituted for Cllr N. Prescott, Cllr L. Gillham substituted for Cllr I. Mullens

#### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20 September were confirmed and signed as a true record.

#### 3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs S. Dennett and M. Darby

#### 4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

#### 5. Draft Fraud Policy

The Committee received a presentation from Reigate & Banstead Borough Council officers on fraud which outlined the legal framework the fraud team worked within and case studies that resulted in prosecution. The Committee thanked the officers for their presentation.

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning then outlined the draft Fraud Policy, which committee approved for a period of consultation with tenants and leaseholders.

#### Resolved that:

**An 8-week consultation exercise with tenants and leaseholders on the draft Housing Fraud Policy be approved.**

## 6. Estates Services Contract

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning outlined the importance of providing regular, high quality communal cleaning to Council owned properties and the current issues that prohibited this. They outlined future intentions to combine the elements of estate services across Council stock into one contract.

## 7. Garage Allocations Policy

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning outlined the need for a garage allocation policy that gave preference to local residents. This policy would allocate garages based on four priorities. Following a consultation period in which one response was received, members were asked to approve the Garage Allocations Policy.

There was a discussion around the requirement within the policy that vehicles must be taxed as they felt that it would discourage people from using their garages to store vehicles they wished to keep off the road. It was believed that evidence of a SORN notification may negate this and the Head of Housing Services & Business Planning would ensure this was confirmed before implementing the policy, whilst it would be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it confirmed to current legislation.

### **Resolved that:**

**The Garage Allocation Policy was approved.**

## 8. Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

The Head of Housing Technical Services outlined the Council's desire to apply for the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave 2.2 that would enable the Council to bring 426 of its 757 properties up to a grade C energy rating. This would enable the Housing Service to hit its carbon reduction target of ensuring all council owned social housing units had an energy efficiency rating of C or above by 2030.

The Head of Housing Technical Services assured members that the Housing Service was being supported in its bid free of charge by a consultant to ensure a stronger application and greater chance of success, whilst lessons had been learned from the previous unsuccessful bid in wave 1.

### **Resolved that:**

**A bid to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund be approved when it re-opens.**

**Delegated authority be given to the Assistant Chief Executive (Place) in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to approve a bid to the fund – including clarified finance figures.**

**It was noted that if the bid was successful, the Housing Service would be on track to deliver a C energy efficiency rating two years after a successful bid.**

## 9. Performance

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning acknowledged the disappointment with the performance of the repairs contractor and updated members on the performance notice

served on the contractor on 26 October that required them to provide a response within 21 days on how they proposed to improve performance. A reply was expected within 21 days. Recruitment issues had hindered the contractor, however the performance on voids had started to improve, with November figure for voids currently being 36 days.

The numbers of households in B&B reflected the increased number of approaches forthcoming with complex presentations, and the Council's no second night out policy meant that people were placed as emergencies who may not meet the priority need threshold. Furthermore it was acknowledged that the 99.96% for gas compliance was the result of one property refusing entry which had now been resolved.

The Head of Housing & Business Planning also noted that a significant number of decent home failures related to roofs. A new contractor would be retendered in January, and contractors would check the roofs once the contract was in place.

In response to a member question about the rise in anti-social behaviour incidents it was noted that these were complex cases that required court injunctions and often involved drug use, violence, and severe mental health issues.

#### **10. SO42 – 1042 – Temporary Accommodation**

The SO42 was noted. The Head of Housing & Business Planning answered questions around the current use of temporary accommodation following the SO42. They confirmed that some of these units that had been temporary accommodation were now being let to families who found it difficult to find affordable accommodation in the current housing market.

#### **11. Exclusion of press and public**

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting during the consideration of the remaining matters under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as set out in Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

#### **12. Housing Revenue Account Development**

The Head of Housing & Business Planning outlined the importance of the schemes in enabling the Council to meet its target of 125 new housing units over five years. To ensure the success of these schemes, a Clerk of Works and Employers Agent would need to be procured to monitor the programme for each site and manage contractual matters. They would also ensure health and safety and building regulations compliance.

It would be intended that the properties affected would be let on affordable rents in the region of 65% of the market rent at the time which would benefit working families and ensure viability of the scheme in the long term.

A member questioned if the development would count towards the Council's target of 125 homes if the units were classified as affordable housing rather than social housing. This would be clarified in January's meeting.

Further questions arose around the viability of keeping rents at 65% of market level. It was explained that affordable housing always aimed to stay below market level, and this was

comparable to other London rents. The Chair assured members that should the 65% figure prove unviable, he would bring the matter back to Committee rather than agreeing delegated authority function.

**The Committee resolved that:**

1. **The proposed tenure mix for each scheme as detailed in the report was agreed.**
2. **The Council's bid to Homes England for Capital Grant Funding and the financing of the schemes as set out in the report was agreed.**
3. **The procurement route proposed for a Clerk of Works/ Employers Agent to assist with both schemes, the cost of which was included within the total budgets was agreed.**
4. **Delegated authority was given to the Corporate Head of Housing or Assistant Chief Executive (Place) to agree, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, the rent level for each scheme.**

**The Committee recommended to Council that:**

1. **The budget and subsequent procurement of the first piece of land and the completed scheme in line with the planning approval (if obtained) and agreed specification be approved.**
2. **The budget and subsequent procurement of the second piece of land and the completed scheme in line with the planning approval and agreed specification be approved.**
3. **Subject to the approval of Recommendation 1 and 2 above, Full Council were recommended to approve funds from the total budget to be utilised within the financial year 2023/24 to commence the legal process for each of the schemes, to be financed from HRA Reserves.**

Chairman

Meeting ended 20.51