

# **HOUSING COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2020**

Present: Councillor T A Cullen Chair

Councillors: S A Bagshaw  
L A Ball BEM  
B C Carr  
S Carr (Ex-Officio)  
J C Goold  
T Hallam  
H G Khaled MBE  
J W McGrath  
J P T Parker  
D D Pringle (substitute)  
J M Owen  
H E Skinner  
E Williamson

An apology for absence was received from Councillor E Kerry.

## 39. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 40. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## 41. **BUSINESS PLANS AND FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2020/21 – 2022/23**

The Committee considered the proposals for business plans, revenue budget estimates for 2020/21, capital programme for 2020/21 to 2022/23 and proposed fees and charges for 2020/21. Councillors noted that 2 new critical success indicators had been introduced for Housing. It was confirmed that rents for housing and garages would increase by 1% above the CPI rate of inflation. The process of applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant and the annual inspection of pathways were discussed.

- 1. RESOLVED that the Housing Business Plan be approved.**
- 2. RECOMMENDED to the Finance and Resources Committee that it recommends to Council that the following be approved:**
  - a) the detailed revenue budget estimates for 2020/21 (base) including any revenue development submissions**
  - b) The capital programme for 2020/21 to 2022/23**
  - c) The fees and charges for 2020/21**

42. HOUSING STRATEGY 2020 - 2024

The Committee received an update on the new Housing Strategy. It would be based on the new priorities set out in the Corporate Plan - to build more houses, to ensure homes are safe and more energy efficient, to prevent homelessness and help people to be financially secure and independent.

43. HOUSING DELIVERY PLAN UPDATE

The Committee was updated on the Housing Delivery Plan (HDP). It had been approved by the Housing Committee and the Finance and Resources Committee in June and July 2019 respectively. Three former Right to Buy properties had since been purchased with a further four in process. A further three properties were earmarked as New Build Development on Council owned land. Planning applications would be submitted for other council owned sites later in the year.

**Resolved that:**

- 1) **A consultation exercise be undertaken in 2020 for the sites without planning permission to seek local resident's views**
- 2) **A delegation be made to the Deputy Chief Executive, following consultation with the Chair of Housing, to agree the mix of the new housing for the sites**
- 3) **A delegation be made to the Deputy Chief Executive, following consultation with the Chair of Housing, for the Council to submit planning applications for the development of new rented housing**
- 4) **A delegation be made to the Deputy Chief Executive, following consultation with the Chair of Housing, for all key approvals relating to the assessment of tender returns for the main construction consultants, including qualitative criteria and the subsequent award of these contracts.**

44. EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2020-24

The issues surrounding empty dwellings was discussed. When buildings are vacant for an increased length of time, anti-social behaviour typically rises. This in turn leads to a negative impact on property values and amenity in the immediate neighbourhood. A scoring matrix is used to rate all long-term empty dwellings with action being taken on a 'worst first' basis. Further clarification regarding Council Tax on properties with a conservation order on was sought.

**RESOLVED that the Empty Homes Strategy 2020/24 be approved.**

45. MOBILITY SCOOTER POLICY

Since the Grenfell Tower fire, the Council had reviewed its Policy arrangements, fire risk assessments and potential hazards and areas of particular concern. The Fire and Rescue Service had been consulted in formulating the policy. Residents on the Housing Performance Group were thanked for initially raising this issue.

**RESOLVED that the Mobility Scooter Policy be approved.**

46. MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNAL AREAS POLICY

Since the Grenfell Tower fire, the Council had reviewed its Communal Areas Policy arrangements. The new policy set out how the Council would manage its communal areas within its council blocks and schemes. The storage, decoration and other such personalisation or personal usage of communal areas in Council blocks and schemes would be prohibited.

**RESOLVED that the Management of Communal Areas Policy be approved.**

47. GAS AND ELECTRICAL POLICIES

In November 2018 the Housing Committee had approved new Gas and Electrical Policies. The policies were to be reviewed annually. It was confirmed that gas appliances were serviced annually and electrical installations on a five yearly basis. Visits to properties were offered in evenings and Saturday mornings.

**RESOLVE that the Gas and Electrical Policies be approved.**

48. HOUSEMARK AND SURVEY OF TENANTS AND RESIDENTS UPDATE

A survey of tenants and residents (STAR) had been undertaken during the summer of 2019. Analysis is provided on a quarterly and annually basis. 1123 surveys had been completed up from 365 in 2017. The Committee noted the report.

49. RENT PAYMENT METHODS

The Committee was updated on the various options available for tenants to pay rent. Paying by Standing Orders was the most popular method but paying on-line was increasing. The use of the payment kiosk at the Council Offices in Beeston was declining.

External suppliers had been approached which would enable tenants to pay their rent via a card at a network of local shops. Meetings had been held with two suppliers about the services they are able to offer. Most residents would be in close proximity to one of these stores which would offer extended opening hours

50. HOUSING REPAIRS REVIEW

The Committee was presented with the findings from the Housing Repairs Service Review. The in-house Repairs service was discussed along with the proposed modifications.

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1. Option C be adopted to retain the current in-house Repairs Service with modifications to processes and systems.**

**2. All recommendations within appendix 3 be approved.**

51. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme and expressed its gratitude to the employees of the Council. The hard work was reflected in the full Work Programme.

**RESOLVED that the Work Programme be approved.**

52. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

**RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

53. AIDS AND ADAPTIONS

**RESOLVED that the aids and adaptations works be approved.**

54. FENCE REPLACEMENT

**RESOLVED to replace the damaged fence.**