

THE CABINET
4th February, 2019

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Allen, Beck, Hoddinott, Lelliott and Roche.

Also in attendance Councillor Steele (Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Watson.

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

99. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A member of the public detailed his own concerns about the availability of accommodation in the Borough, the number of people on the Council housing waiting list and the availability of good quality well maintained private landlord properties.

He asked what action could the Council take to ensure appropriate good quality housing was available for tenants across the Borough.

Councillor Beck, Cabinet Member for Housing, agreed with the member of the public's sentiment about the number of people on the Council's waiting list for accommodation which was rising year on year. However, there was only so much the Council could do through its own Council housing stock.

The Council did have four Selective Licensing Schemes within the Borough in terms of the private rented sector, which was specifically intended to raise housing conditions in those areas and to work with landlords to raise those standards laid out by the Selective Licensing Scheme.

The Council found some early signs of success, but it remained an ongoing challenge. There would be opportunities to work with the private rented sector to raise standards, but it was more difficult where Selective Licensing was not in operation.

The Council had been given powers to regulate the private sector and it was doing all it could to raise standards. The Council would take action to prosecute landlords who were not complying and would continue to pursue the best for the residents of the Borough.

100. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the agenda item 7 on the grounds that the appendices involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

101. REVISION TO HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

Further to Minute No. 93 this item was deferred to the next meeting of the Cabinet to be held on Monday, 18th February, 2019 at 10.00 a.m.

102. WHINNEY HILL AND CHESTERHILL AVENUE - SITES DISPOSAL

Further to Minute No. 94 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21st January, 2019 consideration was given to the report which detailed how the Council undertook a procurement process in 2013 to identify a developer partner to build homes on Whinney Hill and Chesterhill Avenue. A development agreement was signed in 2014. This required a start on site on Whinney Hill before Chesterhill Avenue would be released. A start on site was not achieved within the agreed period and the legal agreement ended in 2017.

The most straightforward route to delivery of these sites was considered to be selling them on the open market, with conditions built in to the sale agreement to ensure an early start on site. It was likely that any purchaser would require their purchase to be conditional upon the grant of planning permission.

The two sites would be marketed separately, but could together deliver approximately 240 homes which would make a significant contribution to Rotherham's housing growth target. It was essential that work started as soon as possible as local communities were understandably frustrated at the lack of visible progress over the past five years, and the anti-social behaviour that had been attracted by these large, vacant sites.

Marketing the sites by informal tender was considered to be the most expedient route to delivery and was, therefore, the recommended approach as this allowed increased flexibility over the terms of the offer and could include the opportunity to share uplifts in the development value through overage and clawback mechanisms.

Resolved:- (1) That disposal on the open market of the Council-owned sites Whinney Hill and Chesterhill Avenue be approved.

(2) That the consideration and acceptance of the offer presenting the best consideration be undertaken by the Assistant Director of Housing and the Acting Assistant Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport, in consultation with the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services and the Cabinet Member for Housing.

(3) That the Assistant Director of Legal Services be authorised to prepare and execute all necessary contractual documentation.

103. DELIVERY OF BUNGALOWS ON HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SITES USING MODERN METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION

Further to Minute No. 95 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21st January, 2019, consideration was given to the report which requested the use of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital resources to fund the delivery of twelve bungalows for older people and people with support needs, as part of a project to trial modern methods of construction (MMC). Funding contributions would also be made from Homes England's Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme and the Sheffield City Region Housing Fund.

This followed an earlier report to Cabinet and Commissioners in July 2018, that set out the reasons for exploring modern methods of construction, primarily that it could provide an efficient alternative to traditional construction methods due to an increased pace of delivery and high standards of quality and energy efficiency.

Another key benefit of the project was that if successful, this could provide an efficient delivery route for building more bungalows on HRA owned small sites, thus contributing to the Borough's housing growth target and meeting the demand for more Council housing that was suitable for older people and people with support needs.

The procurement exercise was now complete and preferred contractors had been identified to build twelve bungalows on the following Housing Revenue Account (HRA) sites:-

- Symonds Avenue, Rawmarsh – eight bungalows.
- Hounsfeld Crescent, East Herringthorpe – two bungalows.
- Hounsfeld Road, East Herringthorpe – two bungalows.

This project was aligned with the aims of the Improving Places Select Commission review of modern methods of construction.

Resolved:- That the use of Housing Revenue Account capital resources up to a maximum of the amount set out in exempt Appendix 2, to deliver twelve bungalows using modern methods of construction on three Council-owned sites in the Hooper and Valley Wards be approved.

**104. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
MANAGEMENT BOARD**

Consideration was given to the circulated report, the contents of which referred to agenda item 5, which was deferred to the next meeting.