

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS
16th June, 2014

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair) and Councillor Roddison.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Godfrey.

J1. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 3RD AND 12TH MARCH AND 7TH APRIL, 2014

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, held on (i) 3rd March, 2014, (ii) 12th March, 2014 and on (iii) 7th April, 2014, be approved as correct records for signature by the Chairman.

J2. PETITION - LITTLE LONDON

Consideration was given to a petition, containing 71 signatures, from residents of Arnside Road and the surrounding area of Maltby, requesting the Council to take appropriate action to improve the condition of this area of Maltby, known locally as 'Little London'. Members discussed the condition of properties in the area, which are part of the private rented sector.

Resolved:- (1) That the petition be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the response to the petition be reported to the next meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods.

J3. FEES AND CHARGES 2014-15 - COMMUNITY PROTECTION SERVICES

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report containing the proposed fees for Community Protection Services (Safer Neighbourhood Unit) for the 2014/2015 financial year.

The proposed charges were as follows:-

Houses in Multiple Occupation

A fee was payable to the Local Authority in respect of licenses for houses in multiple occupation once every five years. Government guidance suggested a minimum fee of £350. The proposed increase in this Council's fee is in line with the rate of inflation (2%) and with the fees charged by neighbouring local authorities.

Housing Act 2004 Legal Notices

The Council had adopted powers in the Housing Act 2004 to charge for the service of Legal Notices. The charge was variable according to the details of the case and the circumstances of those involved, therefore a

specific charge could not be levied other than identifying that the indicative level was likely to be in the region of £400.

Pollution Control

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 and Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999 provided for the setting of fees and charges at levels which would recover the costs incurred by local authorities.

Works in Default

Works in Default are undertaken where there is particularly high risk sustained by non-compliance or where the works are needed to stop the impact on neighbours. The actual cost of the works to be re-charged will be variable on the type, extent and time taken in the arrangement and the doing of the works.

Consultation Fees

Fees are charged in relation to enquiries made from the public and businesses in relation to Environmental searches on land and property.

A full schedule of the proposed 2014/15 fees and charges was set out in the appendix to the submitted report.

Resolved:- That the proposed 2014/15 fees and charges for Community Protection Services, as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved.

J4. HOUSING COMPLAINT AND DESIGNATED PERSON PROCEDURES

Further to Minute No. C145 of the meeting of Cabinet held on 18th December, 2013, the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report concerning the changes to the Council's existing three stage housing complaints process in response to new statutory requirements (Localism Act 2011). The report stated that, in order to minimise any additional burden as a result of the new statutory requirements, a two stage Housing complaint procedure has been created. In addition, the new statutory requirements include a right to have complaints heard by a designated person, either a Member of Parliament, a Councillor or by a Tenant Complaint Panel.

The submitted report provided details of the agreements between the Council and the Designated Persons including further information regarding the creation of the Tenant Complaint Panel. The three individual documents were all appended to the report, for consideration by Members.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the following documents and procedures be approved and implemented in respect of the housing complaints process:-

- (a) the Protocol of Understanding between the Council and Members of Parliament or Councillors in their role as designated person;
- (b) the Acceptance Criteria to recognise a Tenant Complaint Panel and the Panel's Terms of Reference; and
- (c) the acceptance of Rotherfed as the Council's Tenant Complaint Panel.

J5. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2014-2018

Further to Minute No. C255 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21st May, 2014, the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report stating that, as part of the implementation of the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 each local authority has to produce a homelessness strategy and is required to consider housing need within its area, including the needs of homeless households, to whom local authorities have a statutory duty to provide assistance.

The first Homelessness Strategy was produced in 2003, and was refreshed in 2008. A new Homelessness Strategy is required for the period 2014 to 18. In preparation for the new Homelessness Strategy, extensive consultation has taken place, and Improving Places Select Commission has undertaken a scrutiny review.

The proposed Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan have been developed and priorities applied, in accordance with these findings and recommendations. Both the revised Homelessness Strategy 2014 to 2018 and the Action Plan were attached as appendices to the report.

Reference was made to the scrutiny review of the Homelessness Service (Minute No. 4 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 19th June 2013 refers).

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the Homelessness Strategy 2014 to 2018 and the Action Plan, as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved.

J6. LALPAC ANNUAL SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE 2014-15

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking authorisation for an exemption from contract standing orders to allow Idox Software Ltd to provide the annual support and maintenance for the Lalpac Licensing Software System. The report stated that this system holds all the information and records in relation to all the licensing functions carried out by the Licensing Team.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the contract for the annual support and maintenance of the Lalpac Licensing Software System be exempt from the provisions of standing order 47.6.2 (the requirement to invite at least two oral or written quotations for contracts with a value in excess of £5000 but less than £20,000), enabling the contract to be awarded to Idox Software Ltd., in accordance with the details contained in the report now submitted.

J7. INTEGRATED HOUSING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Further to Minute No. 14 of the meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods held on 4th July, 2011, the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report concerning the procurement, in 2011, of the Integrated Housing Management Information System. This IT system was required to replace seven existing systems, some of which were nearing obsolescence and approaching the end of the period in which the original developer would provide maintenance support. Members noted that the system had been purchased from Civica Universal Housing at the capital cost of £860,000. The submitted report sought authorisation for additional expenditure of £241,000, representing the total anticipated price to ensure full implementation.

Members were informed that the additional cost is a result of two factors: (i) a significant overrun in the implementation timescale and (ii) the need to purchase additional functionality to match or improve on existing elements of the current systems. The proposed additional sum has been the subject of negotiation between the Council and Civica Universal Housing and represents a compromise position reflective of the overrun being a combination of issues arising both from the Council and the company.

It was noted that provision is available for this additional expenditure from within the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2014/15 and there will be no adverse impact on the Council's General Fund Budget.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the allocation of an additional sum of £241,000 for the purchase and implementation of the Civica Universal Housing System, as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved.

J8. AREA PARTNERSHIPS TEAM AND CORPORATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SERVICE

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report containing the proposals for the recommended merger of the Area Partnership Team functions (currently within the Housing and Communities Service), with the Corporate Community Engagement Service, to create a corporate 'hub' for community engagement and involvement activity. This merger will enhance co-ordination of activity and

remove potential duplication of effort. As part of this merger, a unified job description is proposed for the Resident Engagement Officer and Community Involvement Officer posts, to reflect more accurately their core function and to ensure area-based activity is managed and delivered in one place. This will help to promote activity focussed on the deprived communities agenda, broader neighbourhood management activity and community engagement and development.

The report also recommended re-locating two posts currently within the Corporate Community Engagement Service, one to Children and Young Peoples Services and the other to the Neighbourhood Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Team within the Housing and Communities Service. This reflects current and long standing operational arrangements in Children and Young People's Services and in respect of the latter, again creates a consolidated 'hub' for the management and coordination of Safer Rotherham Partnership, community safety, vulnerable persons and anti-social behaviour related issues.

In addition to an improved neighbourhood focus, the proposed merger will enable further development and innovation with regard to modern methods of community engagement and on-line communications; strengthen intelligence sharing with regard to the key issues impacting upon Rotherham's communities; enhance support to Elected Members.

It was noted that a report on this issue would also be submitted to a meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Communities and Cohesion.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the proposed staffing structure changes, as detailed in the report now submitted, be supported and a further report on progress be submitted to a meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods during September 2014.

J9. REPRESENTATION OF THE COUNCIL ON OUTSIDE BODIES 2014-15

Resolved:- That consideration of this matter be deferred until the next meeting.

J10. NEIGHBOURHOODS GENERAL FUND REVENUE OUTTURN 2013-14

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Finance Manager, which provided details of the Revenue Outturn position for Neighbourhoods Services, accounted for in the General Fund for the 2013/2014 financial year.

The report stated that the revised cash limited budget, after budget virements, was £2.461 millions and the net Revenue Outturn for Neighbourhoods General Fund services for 2013/14 was £2.050 millions.

This resulted in an overall underspend of £411,000, a variation of 16.7% and an increase of £90,000 compared with the forecast underspend of £321,000 previously reported in February 2014. The main reasons for the increase were due to additional Housing Revenue Account contributions, delays to planned Dispersed Units works (included in the request for carry forward), an increase in Adaptations works generating additional income and late additional income received for the Licensing Service.

This underspend had been achieved as a result of a range of issues including a stringent moratorium on non-essential spending, careful vacancy management and a number of one-off additional income receipts. However, this approach has been necessary as part of a range of measures designed to ensure that the Council is able to achieve a balanced budget.

Members noted that there were three requests to carry forward unspent balances, to be included in the Council's consolidated outturn forthcoming report to Cabinet, as follows:-

- Members' Community Leadership Fund : £19,232
- Dispersed Units Trading Account : £77,218
- Bereavement Services Partnership : £10,000

The report set out in detail the summary outturn position for the Service and further information and clarification was provided.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the unaudited 2013/14 revenue outturn for Neighbourhoods Services be noted.

(2) That the three requests for the carry forward of unspent balances, as detailed in the report now submitted, be supported.

J11. HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2013-14 OUTTURN REPORT

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Business and Commercial Programme Manager, providing details of the year end outturn position for the Housing Investment Programme 2013/2014, as at 31st March 2014.

The report stated that, at the end of Period 12 (March 2014), the total spend on the Housing Investment Programme was £29,058,584, compared to a budget provision of £31,687,516, which represented an under-spend of £2,628,933 against planned expenditure. Also included within the report, were details of savings and slippage on the individual schemes of work within the overall programme.

Members were informed that there were several schemes for which there had been slippage of the allocated funding, therefore requiring that funding (amounting to a total of £730,800) to be transferred from the 2013/14 financial year to the 2014/15 financial year.

Members discussed a number of salient issues, especially the expenditure on empty homes and the work to return void properties to a standard appropriate for letting to tenants.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the year end out-turn position for the Housing Investment Programme 2013/2014, as at 31st March 2014, as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved.

(3) That the slippage of £730,800 allocated resources from 2013/14 to 2014/15, as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved.

J12. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT OUTTURN 2013-14

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Finance Manager, which contained the unaudited outturn position of the Housing Revenue Account for the financial year 2013/14. The report:-

(i) showed that the outturn position was an overall surplus (transfer to Working Balance) of £1.570 millions, a variation of £4.168 millions from the budget; in large part, this was the result of tight financial management achieving a series of savings whilst maximising collectable income;

(ii) summarised the key income and expenditure variances from the approved budget; and

(iii) included, as an appendix, the year end Housing Revenue Account Operating Statement for the 2013/14 financial year.

Members noted that, during 2013/14, it had been possible to deliver the service at a cost lower than that budgeted for and this position, together with the fact that actual income generated was higher than budget, had resulted in a substantial saving on the net cost of service. The Operating Statement showed that when £71,000 of interest on balances received in 2013/14 is added to the Cost of Service, there is a Net Operating Expenditure of £9.541 millions. The cumulative total in Working Balance is £16.698 millions, an increase of £4.168 millions when compared to budget.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the unaudited Housing Revenue Account outturn for 2013/14 be noted.

(The Chairman authorised consideration of the following item at this meeting, as a matter of urgency, to enable the proposal to be implemented without delay)

J13. PROVISION OF A SHOWER OVER THE BATH IN EMPTY RMBC BUNGALOWS.

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services concerning a proposal to fit showers over the bath in Council-owned properties with ground floor accommodation. The report stated that:-

- : the demand for Council properties with ground floor accommodation, with showering facilities, exceeds the supply for people with physical needs;
- : tenants expect to be able to exercise more choice, flexibility and control over where they live;
- : the Council has a duty to supply adapted accommodation to meet the needs of people who have a disability.

Members agreed that these alterations ought to be undertaken whenever properties became empty. Discussion took place on the estimated cost of the proposed alterations. The detailed specification for the installation of a shower over a bath was appended to the submitted report.

Members expressed a preference for Option 1, detailed within the report, that when a bungalow with conventional bathing becomes empty, a shower shall be installed over the bath prior to the future letting of the property.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the installation of showers over the bath, in Council-owned properties with ground floor accommodation, as detailed in Option 1 within the report now submitted, be approved.

J14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs, indicated below, of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

J15. INTRODUCTORY TENANCY REVIEW PANEL

It was noted that an Introductory Tenancy Review Panel had been held on 25th April, 2014, comprising Councillors Sims (in the Chair), Sharman and Tweed to review a decision to terminate an Introductory Tenancy.

The decision made by the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer to serve a Notice of Proceedings of Possession on 25th March, 2014, had been confirmed by the Panel.

Resolved:- That the Panel's decision be noted.

(Exempt under Paragraph 2 of the Act - information likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

J16. DISTRICT HEATING INVESTMENT PLAN

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, stating that this Council operates 37 District Heating Schemes throughout the Borough, serving 1,311 dwellings. In response to a Scrutiny Review improvement plan, for the management and delivery of district heating, a full condition survey has recently been undertaken to the infrastructure, plant and dwelling-side heating supply for each scheme. The Scrutiny Review report had previously been considered by the Cabinet (Minute No. C105 of the Cabinet meeting held on 5th December, 2012, refers).

The submitted report contained the investment requirements and funding needed to implement an improvement plan over the next eight years. This robust approach to assessing the condition of each of the 37 district heating schemes had resulted in the following recommendations:-

- : 10 schemes should be retained and benefit from further investment;
- : 6 schemes should be retained, but reduced in size to achieve efficiencies;
- : 20 schemes (all within the Fitzwilliam estate at Swinton) should be replaced with an alternative solution;
- : the scheme at Beeversleigh should be replaced with an alternative district heating;
- : the investment in new fuel stores for three Bio Mass systems, subject to Renewable Heat Incentive grant funding being obtained.

Members were informed that a budget of £2 millions has been allocated during the 2014/2015 financial year, for investment in District Heating. One of the first improvements will be made at the Fitzwilliam Estate, Swinton. A further proposal is to improve the efficiency of schemes by reducing their overall size and to begin a programme of replacing dwelling-side distribution pipes and radiators as they are all beyond their useful life.

Resolved: (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the principles of the District Heating investment plan, to take place over the next eight years, as detailed in the report now submitted, be supported.

(3) That the proposed investment in the Fitzwilliam Estate Swinton and efficiency improvements to identified schemes in 2014/15, as detailed in the report now submitted, be supported.

(4) That a further report identifying the green energy solution for new District Heating at Beeverleigh be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods.

(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial/business affairs of any person (including the Council))

J17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods be held at the Town Hall, Rotherham on Monday, 14th July, 2014, commencing at 10.00 a.m.