

Present: Councillor Jackie Kirk (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Jane Loffhagen, Councillor Ralph Toofany,
Councillor Pat Vaughan and Councillor Keith Weaver

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Andy Kerry and Councillor Liz Maxwell

26. Confirmation of Minutes - 10 October 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2017 be confirmed.

27. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

28. Establishment of a Wholly Owned Housing Company

Bob Ledger, Director of Housing and Regeneration

- a. presented a report that detailed the proposed Housing Company which would be wholly owned by the Council.
- b. advised that the Executive approved in principle the formation of a wholly owned housing company at the meeting held on 29th February 2016 subject to a detailed business plan.
- c. explained the 4 key objectives of the Housing Company as detailed at paragraph 5.1.1 of the report.
- d. advised that in establishing the business case officers had taken specialist advice from Trowers & Hamblins LLP in respect of legal and governance matters as detailed at paragraph 5.2 of the report.
- e. stated that the company would not employ any staff at its point of creation and for the foreseeable future but would utilise the Councils housing management, legal and financial services and would pay the Council for the use of services.
- f. referred to paragraph 6 of the report and detailed the financial implications.
- g. referred to paragraph 9.2 of the report and explained the key risks associated with the preferred approach.
- h. invited members questions and comments

Question – How much interest would be charged on the money loaned?

Response – The interest paid by the company to the General Fund would be around 5%.

Question – If there was anything wrong with a developer would the Council be liable?

Response – The Company would procure a builder in the same way as the Council had procured builders for the new build project.

Question – How many of the properties would be sold?

Response – In the market plan 42 properties would be for market rent and 11 properties would be for market sale. Research on the housing market in Lincoln showed that there was a limit on how much the Company could charge for rent. Selling 11 properties would generate income early in the business plan.

Question – Would there be enough sites in Lincoln?

Response – There was a limited amount of land within the Lincoln boundaries. A planning application would be submitted for 320 units on Queen Elizabeth Road. Also land on the Western Growth Corridor was needed, other sites would need to be considered.

Question – Would the Company need to pay Capital Gains Tax?

Response – Stamp Duty, Corporation Tax and VAT would have to be paid.

Question – Where would the Company borrow money from?

Response – Money would be borrowed by the General Fund and then lent to the Company with a margin being applied.

Question – Could money be borrowed from other local authorities?

Response – Yes it could be.

Question – Why would the Company be offering assured short hold tenancies rather than secure tenancies?

Response – Assured short hold tenancies would provide more freedom for the company, for example if would need to secure a property quickly if rent was not being paid. This would be a different model to the model used by the HRA and would in effect reflect the private rented sector need to operate commercially.

Question – Would there be development in Park Ward?

Response – If the Company was established there could be a role for development in the Park Ward area, however, the resources would need to be found.

Question – How much liaison had there been with other local authorities who had set up Housing Companies?

Response – Officers had liaised with both South Holland and North Kesteven District Councils They had also received legal advice from Trowers & Hamblins who were the specialists in the formation of similar company models.

Question – Would people be able to access options such as the rent to buy scheme?

Response – There would be opportunities to access the sale properties through rent to buy and also other options would be considered such as shared ownership.

Question – Would people be entitled to the Right to Buy Scheme?

Response – No as they would not be secure tenancies and they would be run by the company not the Council.

Question – Would the current staffing levels need to be increased in future?

Response – It was proposed to keep the staffing levels the same.

Question – Would the company pay off the loans early if the opportunity arose?

Response – The company might outperform the business plan, officers had to be prudent when developing the business plan.

Question – Would there be enough money set aside to cover repairs/

Response – The budget had been set based on experience as landlords in the HRA and from advice provided by consultants who had been involved in setting up other companies. Any immediate major work would be covered in the builders warranty.

Question – Would families on the housing waiting list be given the opportunity to rent a property before they were advertised on the open market?

Response – We would offer to families on the housing waiting list first, however, it was not anticipated that there would be much take up as the rent would be the

same as the private sector. The company would likely utilise a private Estate Agent to market the houses.

RESOLVED that the narrative of the business case and detailed financial estimates of the Company Business Plan be noted and referred to Executive for approval.

29. Key Holding Progress Report

Simon Colburn, Assistant Director Health and Environment Services

- a. presented a progress report following the implementation of the Key Holding System.
- b. gave an overview of the background to the key holding system as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report.
- c. summarised the following key points as detailed at paragraph 4 of the report:
 - Problems with the Paxton system were quickly resolved and it was launched successfully.
 - The number of regular hirers of the Community centres had increased to 58.
 - Since the start of the key holding scheme a total of over 160 hirers had been key holder trained plus 8 City Council staff, 4 County Council Staff and 20 contractors.
 - A future improvement would be if some of the internal doors could be added to the Paxton System as it was clear that some hirers were using rooms which were not booked.
 - All incidents of inadequate cleaning, lights being left on etc by the key holder had been logged along with the action taken to remedy any problems.
 - Officers believed that the current satisfaction levels for users of the service was high. A full satisfaction survey was being carried out asking users for feedback and suggestions on how the service could be improved.
- d. advised that the financial savings in the operation of the community centres in year 2016 to 2017 was £39,000. In the first full year of operation it was £61,700.
- e. invited members questions and comments

Question – How were the cleaning issues resolved?

Response – A private contractor had been employed to clean the community centres which had resolved the issues.

Question – What would happen to the underspend on the £6,000 budget?

Response – The support budget of £6,000 per annum would remain, however, money that was not spent would not be rolled over to the next year.

Question – Would the Neighbourhood Boards be charged to use the Community Centres?

Response – No, as it was agreed to allow the boards to use the community centres for meetings as part of the Neighbourhood Working Review.

Question – Would the community centres be redecorated?

Response – Redecoration work would take place as and when needed, however, there was not the money available to complete a full refurbishment of the community centres.

Question – Would the Paxton system be extended to the internal doors?

Response – The system was already being used on internal doors at Moorland, it would be extended to other Community Centres where needed.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted and be brought back to Policy Scrutiny Committee for review in 2 years' time.

30. Proposals for Revision of Public Health Funeral Provision

Simon Colburn, Assistant Director Health and Environmental Services

- a. presented a proposal to amend the current level of public health funeral service provision.
- b. advised that the Council had a legal duty under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984, to make funeral arrangements where there was no next of kin or other persons able or willing to make those arrangements.
- c. referred to the graph at 3.5 of the report showing the increase in public health funerals in recent years and advised on the possible causes of the increase.
- d. advised that the Council currently provided an enhanced level of service over and above what was legally required.
- e. advised that a move to a direct cremation model would provide significant savings, with the cost of the direct cremation being more than 50% less than the current model.

Members asked if the deceased name would be said at a direct cremation?

Simon Colburn, Assistant Director Health and Environmental Services advised that there was a procedure that would be followed which included saying the deceased name. He reassured members that dignity would be kept at all times during the cremation.

The Chair requested that a post implementation review of the service provision be brought to committee in 1 years' time.

RESOLVED that the report be supported and referred to Executive for approval.

31. Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021

Alison Timmins, Housing Solutions and Support Manager

- a. presented the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021 for consideration prior to approval by Executive.
- b. advised that a homelessness review had been carried out by LCHSG across the seven local authority areas in Lincolnshire and gave an

overview of the purpose of the review as detailed at paragraph 4 of the report.

- c. outlined the consultation that had taken place as detailed at paragraph 5 of the report.
- d. highlighted the following key themes that had emerged:
 - Partnership – developing and maintaining strategic partnerships
 - Prevent – preventing homelessness wherever possible
 - Protect – the most vulnerable from homelessness including rough sleeping
 - Place – ensuring the right housing solutions for households
 - Possibility – working towards sustainable future for supported housing
- e. advised on the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the impacts that it would have on local authorities.
- f. referred to paragraph 9 of the report and advised on the annual grant received from the Department for Communities and Local Government and highlighted recent successful funding bids as well as proposed future bids.
- g. summarised statutory homelessness in Lincoln over recent years and highlighted the emerging challenges for the City as detailed at paragraph 10.3 of the report.
- h. asked for members questions and comments.

Question – How many rough sleepers were there currently in Lincoln?

Response – There was currently 28 rough sleepers which had recently risen from 12.

Question – Were B&B's used by the Council?

Response – B&B's were used as temporary accommodation whilst investigations were carried out.

Comment – The Avenue referral process was not working.

Response – Problems with the referral system had been recognised and were being addressed with a new provider.

Question – Would there be enough staff to cope with the changes that would be brought in with the new Act.

Response – We had been given additional funding which would be used to employ 3 additional temporary staff.

RESOLVED that

1. the positive outcomes in the review from the previous strategy 2012 – 2016 be noted.
2. The Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017 – 2021 be endorsed and referred to Executive for approval.
3. the local picture in respect of homelessness in City of Lincoln be noted.

Update

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the report 'Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2017-18 and Executive Work Programme Update'.
- b. presented the Executive Work Programme December 2016 – December 2017.
- c. requested councillors to submit what items they wished to scrutinise from the Executive Work Programme and policies of interest.
- d. invited members questions and comments.

Members made no further comments or suggestions regarding the Policy Scrutiny work programme.

RESOLVED that:

1. the work Policy Scrutiny work programme be noted.
2. the Executive work programme be noted.

33. Health Scrutiny Update

The Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee updated members of the business that had been discussed at the Health Scrutiny meeting held on 11 October 2017, these were:

- Lincolnshire Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) Update
- Learning Disabilities: Consultation on the Permanent Closure of Long Leys Court
- Lincoln Walk in Centre: Decision of Lincolnshire West CCG

RESOLVED that the report be noted.