

Cabinet Housing Panel
22 January 2018

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

* Reporting to Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET HOUSING PANEL held on Monday 22 January 2018 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors J. Boulton (Chairman)
M. Perkins (Vice-Chairman)

M.Birleson, M.Cook, J.Cragg, S.Glick, M.Holloway,
K.Holman, H.Quenet ,F.Thomson

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Co-opted Members:-
Tenants' Panel Representatives
D.Fuller and R.Read

Independent Representative
R.Paris and S.Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Executive Member (Governance, Community Safety, Police and Crime Commissioner and Corporate Property) (Councillor R.Trigg)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Executive Director (Housing and Communities) (S.Russell)
Head of Community and Housing Strategy (S.Chambers)
Head of Housing Operations (S.Pearson)
Head of Property Services (P.Gray)
Governance Services Officer (M.Lowe)

One minute's silence was held in a tribute to Geoff Clark, who had, for many years, served on the Tenants Panel and the Housing Trust Board.

40. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41. ACTIONS UPDATE

The status of actions agreed at the Panel meeting on 30 October 2017 in the report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

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42. MEARS UPDATE: SHARED OBJECTIVES FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS OF THE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

Members received a verbal update from the Head of Property Services on the shared objectives of the Council and the contractor Mears for the last five years of the repairs and maintenance contract.

A Member felt that the appointment offered to tenants for the annual gas safety check did not leave enough room for manoeuvre where the appointment offered was not convenient for tenants.

The Executive Director (Housing and Communities) explained that the letter clearly invited tenants to make contact with the Council to re-arrange the appointment.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the excellent partnership working between Mears and the Council be acknowledged and noted.
- (2) That the annual gas safety check appointment letter to tenants be shared with Members at the next meeting to obtain their views on the wording should the time and date not be convenient to Tenants.

43. STRATEGIC HOUSING UPDATE

Report of Executive Director (Housing and Communities) provided an update on the work of the strategic housing service and an overview of the current key issues.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

44. PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR HOUSING PERIOD QRT 2 2017-18

Report of the Executive Director (Housing and Communities) provided a summary of the strategic key performance indicators (KPIs), which were monitored monthly by Heads of Service, together with comments about performance by exception.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

45. TENANCY POLICY AND FLEXIBLE TENANCY POLICY

Report of the Executive Director (Housing and Communities) seeking authority to update the Council's Tenancy Policy which included the removal of references to

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the Housing Trust and also to align the policy with the Tenancy Strategy which was published in 2013.

The previous tenancy policy had been approved in April 2012 by the Housing Trust's Board.

The Council had been granting five year flexible term tenancies since November 2013 and the review process for these had been due to commence in November 2017. Now that this process was about to commence on current tenancies, the functional details of the review process have been identified, including reporting, and had been updated in a new, separate, procedural document to provide better guidance for staff who would be carrying out the reviews.

Members noted that there were no changes in the updated policy to the grounds for refusing to renew a flexible tenancy at the end of the five year term. These were the same as already approved in April 2012.

The legally mandated procedural guidance for tenants who wished to seek a review of a decision not to renew a flexible tenancy was now also in a separate document that could be issued to tenants separately on request.

Members received a tabled document, which identified the changes made to the original Tenancy Policy, dated April 2012.

Members were of the view that any future amendments to the flexible tenancy review procedure made in line with any future legal changes or changes in procedure should be brought back to the Panel and delegated powers not be given to the Executive Director, (Housing and Communities).

Following discussion Members agreed that further information on financial assessment, including trigger points relating to income levels, savings, investments or equity be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the revised policy be recommended to Cabinet for adoption by the Council.
- (2) That the procedure document be brought back to the Panel for consideration before any amendments to the flexible tenancy review procedure legal or otherwise were put in place or implemented.
- (3) That further information on financial assessment, including trigger points relating to income levels, savings, investments or equity be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

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The pro-forma setting out the Panel's work programme had been updated since the last meeting to enable forward planning if items to be considered to take place.

RESOLVED:

That the updated work programme be noted.

47. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Panel is asked to resolve:

That under Section 100(A)(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for items 14 and 15 (if any) on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) and Paragraph 3 (private financial or business information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

48. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR EXTERNAL AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS WORK TO COUNCIL HOUSING

Report of the Executive Director (Housing and Communities) provided details of the procurement process for the external works contract, and sought approval of the award of contract for external aids and adaptations work to Council housing.

RESOLVED:

That the contract for the provision of external aids and adaptations to Council properties (housing) be awarded to Gracelands Complete Maintenance Services Ltd.

Meeting ended at 9.12 pm
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