

Cabinet Housing Panel  
25 October 2018

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

\* Reporting to Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET HOUSING PANEL held on Thursday 25 October 2018 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors F.Thomson (in the Chair)

H.Bower (substituting for C.Gillett), M.Cook, S.Glick,  
M.Holloway, T.Jackson-Mynott, R.Lass, S.Markiewicz  
(substituting for J.Boulton), H.Quenet, S.Roberts  
(substituting for M.Birleson), R.Trigg (substituting for  
T.Kingsbury)

ALSO PRESENT: Co-opted Members:-

Tenants' Panel Representatives

R.Read and B.Rhodes

Independent Representative

R.Paris

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) (S.Russell)

Head of Community and Housing Strategy (S.Chambers)

Head of Property Services (P.Gray)

Head of Housing Operations (S.Pearson)

Governance Services Officer (M.Lowe)

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34. SUBSTITUTIONS

The following substitutions of Committee Members had been made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 19-22:

Councillor H.Bower for Councillor C.Gillett  
Councillor S.Markiewicz for Councillor J.Boulton  
Councillor R.Trigg for Councillor T.Kingsbury  
Councillor S.Roberts for Councillor M.Birleson

The Chairman announced that she had agreed to vary the order of the agenda. Item 9 - Update On Housing Delivery Project would be taken before Item 8 - Scrutiny Panel - Review Of Repairs Call Centre.

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35. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.Birleson, J.Boulton, C.Gillett and T.Kingsbury.

The Chairman announced that, Simon Smith, Independent Co-opted Member, had, with regret, resigned from the Panel due to his work commitments which made it difficult for him to attend meetings.

Simon, in his email to the Council, stated that he had enjoyed and benefited from his time with the Panel and hoped that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council carried on doing the good works to improving and expanding upon the housing offer to its residents.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Council, thanked Simon for his contribution to the work of the Housing Trust and Cabinet Housing Panel and wished him well in the future.

The Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) advised that an Independent Co-opted member would be appointed to the Cabinet Panel in due course.

36. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

37. ACTIONS UPDATE

The status of actions agreed at the Panel meeting on 20 September 2018 in the report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

38. UPDATE ON HOUSING DELIVERY PROJECT

The Panel received two informative presentations.

The Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) presented an update on Delivering Homes for Welwyn Hatfield, the main points covered were as follows.

- Affordability and demand assessment.
- Herts 'Building Futures' Award for Design Excellence
- Recognition in 'Inside Housing'
- Development Strategy and Business Plan, including a setting up a new housing company

Steve Partridge, Director, Housing Consultancy, Savills UK then presented the affordability analysis and results of the market research undertaken. The purpose of this was to identify which household groups in our community had difficulty accessing housing.

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The main areas covered were.

- Purpose and methodology
- Affordability analysis – summary
- Overall Borough – and markets within the Borough
- Exploring the range and type of products that could become available

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information received during the presentations on the progress of the Council's housing delivery project, which detailed the affordability analysis and results of the market research undertaken be noted.
- (2) That the presentations be circulated to all Members of the Panel.

39. SCRUTINY PANEL - REVIEW OF REPAIRS CALL CENTRE

Report of the Chairman of the Tenants Panel outlined the Action Plan for the Repairs Contact Centre following the review by the Scrutiny Sub-Group.

The Cabinet Housing Panel thanked the Scrutiny Sub-Group for their excellent piece of work and welcomed their feedback, which had been found useful.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Tenants newsletter, 'Your Voice' containing full contact details be circulated to all Members of the Council.
- (2) Repairs Contact Centre be noted and actioned as appropriate.

40. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT FUNDING AND USE OF BETTER CARE FUND

Report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) sought approval to use the surplus Disabled Facilities Grant budget to support the modernisation programme of the Council's sheltered housing schemes at Guessens Grove/ Lanefield Walk and Chilton Green.

The Better Care Fund was an integrated budget which provided a mechanism for joint health and social care, planning and commissioning, bringing together ring fenced budgets from Clinical Commissioning Groups allocations, the Disabled Facilities Grant and funding paid direct to local government for adult social care services.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding had been included in the Better Care Fund so that the provision of adaptations could be incorporated into the strategic consideration and planning of investment to improve outcomes for service users.

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The amount of money received from the fund has been higher than the capital funding previously provided by central government to support DFGs and a surplus of this fund has built up which at the end of 2017/18 was £672k.

The money was ring fenced for the purpose of providing adaptations or other enablement which improved independence in the home and it was a legitimate use of the fund to be directed to capital projects, such as the sheltered housing improvement project, where the object was to improve health outcomes and maintain independence.

**RESOLVED:**

Members recommend to Cabinet that the use of the set aside capital receipts of £672k are used towards funding the modernisation programme of council owned sheltered housing as set out in the report, which will be incorporated into the 2019/20 budget process.

**41. SOCIAL HOUSING GREEN PAPER "A NEW DEAL FOR SOCIAL HOUSING" - CONSULTATION**

Report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Community) sought comment on the draft response to the consultation on the Government's Social Housing Green Paper "A New Deal For Social Housing".

The Government published its new Social Housing Green Paper on the 14 August 2018, sought views on its vision for social housing "providing safe, secure homes that helped people get on with their lives".

The paper contained five main themes and offered different options to address the problems for social housing as the Government perceives them.

The themes were:

- (a) Ensuring homes are warm and decent
- (b) Effective resolution of complaints.
- (c) Empowering residents and strengthening the regulator
- (d) Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities
- (e) Expanding supply and supporting homeownership.

The consultation ran for eight weeks and provided the Council with the opportunity to deliver a response which was contained within the report.

Members considered the Council's proposed draft response to the consultation on the Social Housing Green Paper, together with the comments received from the Tenants Panel, which had been tabled.

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The Panel Members were of the view that tenants should have an opportunity to be able to comment locally with regards to Question 15 - Effective resolution of complaints.

RESOLVED:

That the draft response to the consultation on the Social Housing Green Paper be amended to reflect the views express by the Panel and be submitted to Government.

42. UPDATE ON QUEENSWAY HOUSE

The Panel received a verbal report which provided an update on progress on the enhanced Fire Protection work at Queensway House from the Head of Property Services.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the verbal update report on the progress on the enhanced Fire Protection work at Queensway House be noted.
- (2) That the statement made by the Head of Property Services be circulated to all Members of the Panel.

43. WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

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

RESOLVED:

That the updated and amended work programme be noted.

Meeting ended 9.40pm  
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