

**OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP
13TH MARCH 2017**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Smidowicz)
The Vice-Chair (Councillor Bebbington)
Councillors Bradshaw, Capleton, Gerrard, Parsons and
Sutherland

Chief Executive
Head of Landlord Services
Democratic Services Officer (NA)

Councillor Harper Davies, Cabinet Lead Member for Housing Landlord Services also attended the meeting in relation to item 89: Housing Capital Programme.

85. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 16th February 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

It was noted on page 3 of the minutes that the Head of Finance and Property Services would send out some follow up information to the Group but it had not been received. This would be followed up by the Democratic Services Officer.

86. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

87. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

88. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions had been submitted.

89. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Landlord Services, to consider the Housing Capital Programme for 2017/18, was considered for pre-decision scrutiny in order to make recommendations as appropriate to the Cabinet (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Landlord Services attended the meeting to assist the Group with the scrutiny of this matter.

Following questions from the Group, the Head of Landlord Services (and the Chief Executive) provided the following responses:

- (i) On the question of tenants refusing to have work undertaken the Group was advised that tenants would be asked subsequent times to allow them to change their mind. Refusals were uncommon and the majority of kitchen and bathroom replacements had been completed which allowed the focus to move to other improvements such as the communal areas of flats.
- (ii) The Group was advised that the Council did not currently have the information about what constituted a higher value property as they were waiting for the government to provide the guidance but assumed that if a property met the threshold then the Council would have to contribute financially. The Group was assured that a contingency plan had been prepared and there were funds available should the Council have to pay any contributions for higher value properties.
- (iii) The budget of £350,000 for new build and acquisitions could be used to buy back properties which had been sold to tenants under the right to buy scheme. This could be considered in a strategy which looked at the housing need for the area.
- (iv) The asbestos management budget was only available to properties which had major asbestos problems and where there were issues of structural damage which needed repairing. In the past asbestos was commonly used in the construction industry.
- (v) There were concerns raised about more money being allocated to the Capital Programme when the Council had not fully spent the funds budgeted for this financial year. It was made clear to the Group that although there had been slippage in spending this year's budget and therefore works being completed, the fund would still be used. Funds allocated for 2017/18 were for other purposes. The funds needed to be allocated so that the Council would meet the Charnwood Standard.
- (vi) The consultation process by the Housing Management Advisory Board was not seen to be inclusive as not all tenants in the Borough had been consulted about their views on improving the Council's garages and there were some who would have welcomed the improvements. It was suggested that in future the Board could expand their consultation strategy to gain wider opinion.
- (vii) The Group was advised that the Housing Capital Programme could be used for areas of housing such as improving old buildings or sheltered accommodation.
- (viii) The Group discussed funding for major structural works and whether there were any areas which particularly suffered from issues with subsidence and damp. The discussion also covered the issue of drain ownership as another problem with some of the houses. The Group was advised that the Chair would investigate the issue further.
- (ix) The Group was informed that advice on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme involving Registered Providers could be provided by the Head of Private and Strategic Sector Housing.
- (x) The housing function at Charnwood had been identified as a success in recent years as there were now less than 5% of properties which did not meet the Charnwood Standard.

The Group voted on whether they supported the recommendation and with the exception of one abstention it was agreed.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendation as set out in the report of the Head of Landlord Services.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Head of Landlord Services on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate to approve the Housing Capital Programme for 2017/18 as set out in the report of the Head of Landlord Services, in order to improve the Council's Housing Stock, bringing it up to the Charnwood Standard and to invest in improvements of communal areas of blocks of flats, thereby delivering the priorities in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan approved by Cabinet in September 2014.

90. OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY – CABINET RESPONSE

A report of the Cabinet was considered setting out its responses to the recommendations of the Group on pre-decision scrutiny items (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet's responses to the Group's recommendations be noted.

Reason

The Group was satisfied that it added value where appropriate and welcomed the Cabinet's consideration of the Group's views and recommendations as part of its decision making process.

91. WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support was considered, to enable the Group to consider its Work Programme and forthcoming Key Decisions and decisions to be taken in private by the Cabinet in order to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny and to provide an opportunity for members of the Group to raise suggestions on issues for scrutiny (in addition to pre-decision scrutiny) which fell within the Group's remit, for scheduling by Scrutiny Management Board (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Group considered the report (and further information on the forthcoming Key Decisions and decisions to be taken in private by the Cabinet provided by the Chief Executive at this meeting) and agreed to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny prior to the next Cabinet meeting, but that the following pre-decision scrutiny items should be added to its work programme at this stage:

- Housing Supplementary Planning Document (13th April 2017)
- Business Plan 2017/18 (13th April 2017)

- Charnwood Grants (13th April 2017).

The Chief Executive informed the Group that in relation to the item “Fearon Hall-Proposed Tripartite Lease Agreement” the Council was expecting to receive information about its progress in July.

RESOLVED that the Group’s current work programme be noted and updated following this meeting, in accordance with the decisions taken during consideration of this item and at this meeting.

Reason

To ensure effective and timely scrutiny, either to provide Cabinet with advice prior to it taking a decision or to ensure that the Council and external public service providers and partners were operating effectively for the benefit of the Borough.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 24th April 2017 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of the minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Group.