

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 27 JANUARY, 2015 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Kraujalis, J.T. (Chairman)

Allen, F.W.C.
Alt, Mrs. A.
Ball, G.D.

Bernard, Mrs. A.F.
Dixon, D.I.

Prior to commencement of the meeting, the Chairman reported that the order of the Agenda would change.

16. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Preece (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. D. Grice and Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader Mrs. M.A. Davis.

17. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No Declarations of Interests were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

18. Minutes

Ian Tennant, Head of Housing and Waste Management reported that residents at Caxton Court Sheltered Housing Scheme, Cannock had asked at the last meeting about the installation of Wifi. He was pleased to report that this was expected to be installed before the end of the financial year and rolled out at other schemes later.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November, 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

19. Park Homes Site

Consideration was given to a Briefing Note of the Head of Environmental Health (Item 5.1 – 5.4).

The Chairman welcomed Mike Walker, Environmental Protection Manager and Eddie Langley, Senior Environmental Officer to the meeting.

In response to a question raised by the Chairman, It was reported that the holiday park (Silver Trees) would be exempt from the act. However, six sites with approximately 92 residents would be affected.

It was reported that there was no concern with problems on the sites, although an issue had been raised concerning the re-sale of fuel, however following investigations, it was found that no profit was made from the re-sale.

Members discussed whether or not it would be possible for the sites to be inspected in the future on a yearly basis.

(A) That the report be noted

(B) That a report on the possibility of inspections of park homes sites be brought back to a future meeting of the Housing Policy Development Committee

20. Housing – Place – Improved Living Environment Quarter 2

Consideration was given to the Housing – Place – Improved Living Environment Quarter 2 Performance Report (Item 3.1 – 3.5).

The Head of Housing and Waste Management referred to the performance measure concerning current tenants' arrears and reported that during the summer the number of officers undertaking rent arrears work fell by half as two were on sick leave and had gained another post. A replacement appointment had since been made, however there was still a lot of work to catch up with.

He reported that rent arrears had peaked to £343,000. However annually the Council collect over £19.5 million of rent income and as at 31 December, 2014, rent arrears had reduced to £325,000.

Members then discussed with the Head of Housing and Waste Management some of the reasons why there were rent arrears.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing – Place – Improved Living Environment Priority Delivery Plan 2014-15 quarter two performance update, be noted.

21. Provision of Photovoltaic Panels

The Head of Housing and Waste Management reported that following recommendations from the Housing Policy Development Committee Cabinet on 20 March, 2014 agreed a scheme to provide photovoltaic panels to up to 300 Council bungalows, through a community share issue by Chase

Community Solar.

The scheme had not progressed as quickly as hoped, as a result of issues with Western Power regarding connections to the national grid. It is hoped that the issues have now been resolved, although on a number of estates the electrical infrastructure is inadequate for solar power connections. A number of other bungalows are also unsuitable for the panels as a result of their orientation, and roof type (hipped roofs cannot accommodate the required area of panel) or shading.

He reported that the scheme was dependent on Chase Community Solar raising the necessary funding from their community share issue. This had been launched on 4 November, 2014 and presently, £450,000 had been raised from 90 investors. This would enable the panels to be installed on 170 bungalows.

However, he reported that the share offer would not close until 13 March, 2015 and Chase Community Solar would be attempting to raise a further £300,000 in order that a further 130 bungalow installations could be undertaken. Investment in the community share issue was low from the Cannock Chase area, with only two investors contributing 0.25% of the funds living in the District. The Council are assisting Chase Community Solar to promote the community share scheme within the District.

The Head of Housing and Waste Management advised that installation work for the 170 bungalows, for which funding was available, was programmed to commence in April, 2015. The panels would be installed by J. Tomlinson who were experienced in this work.

It was reported that Council officers would meet representatives of Chase Community Solar and J. Tomlinson on Thursday to discuss the implementation of the panels, and agree (subject to consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader) the schedule of bungalows upon which the panels would be installed. Once this was agreed, the schedule of the bungalows would be forwarded to all Members for information.

It was reported that following an introductory letter from the Council, representatives from Tomlinsons would visit tenants to explain the scheme and tenants would be allowed to refuse the installation if they so wished.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Head of Housing and Waste Management advised that Chase Community Solar were an Industrial and Provident Society for the benefit of the community (BENCOM). The structure is similar to that of a co-operative, the main difference being that a BENCOM is for the benefit of the community and a co-operative is for the benefit of its members.

22. Sheltered Housing Scheme Service Standards

The Head of Housing and Waste Management gave a presentation on the Sheltered Housing Scheme Service Standards.

Accommodation

- Self contained accommodation
- Lift
- Door entry system
- Fire alarm
- 24 Hour alarm system

Communal Facilities

- Communal lounge and kitchen
- Laundry room
- Assisted bathrooms
- Guest room
- Communal gardens

Services

- Scheme Manager
- Cleaning of communal areas
- Programmed re-decoration (every five years)
- Satellite TV
- Periodic renewal of communal areas fixtures and fittings

Scheme Manager

- Formulation and co-ordination of residents support plans
- Regular visits to residents
- Support to residents with housing service activities
- Co-ordination of cleaning
- Health and Safety of communal areas

Social Activities

- Organised by residents
- Facilitated and encouraged by Scheme Manager
- May include residents from outside scheme
- Activities vary between schemes
- Examples – coffee mornings, lunch clubs, bingo and fitness classes

Services Not Provided

- Personal care (e.g., washing and bathing)
- Nursing and medication
- Collection of shopping or pensions
- Payment of bills
- “Home Help” Services (e.g., cleaning of individual flats, laundry services)

Progressing the Service Standard

- HPDC comments on outline draft – 27/1/15
- Comprehensive standard – HPDC 24/3/15
- Cabinet (subject to HPDC agreement) – 23/4/15
- Information booklet to residents – Summer, 2015

Members were invited to ask questions regarding the presentation.

In response to a question raised by a Member concerning residents who may have deteriorating health, the Head of Housing and Waste Management responded and advised that Scheme Managers would assess the situation and where possible additional services would be provided by support agencies in order that the resident could still live in their own home independently.

A Member was keen to know if sheltered housing was popular and if there were currently any dwellings available.

The Head of Housing and Waste Management indicated that accommodation was currently available. He advised that the schemes were available to people over the age of 55, although older people generally moved into the schemes.

Members also discussed the branding of sheltered housing schemes. It was considered that it was beneficial for this to be reviewed in order to further promote “independent living”. In particular, it was felt that some residents equated sheltered housing with residential care and it was considered that a change in terminology could be beneficial.

23. Work Programme – 2014-15 Municipal Year

Consideration was given to the revised Work Programme (Item 6).

The Head of Housing reported that a further report would be brought back to a future meeting of the Housing Policy Development Committee regarding inspections of Park Homes sites.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That a comprehensive service standard is formulated in accordance with the principles outlined in the presentation for consideration by the Housing Policy Development committee on 24 March 2015.
- (B) That the branding of sheltered housing schemes is reviewed in order to further promote “independent living”

CHAIRMAN

(The meeting concluded at 4:55 p.m.).