

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 19 MARCH, 2013 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

Grice, Mrs. D. (Chairman)
Pearson, A. (Vice-Chairman)

Cartwright, Mrs. S. Kraujalis, J.T.
Jones, Ms. J.L. Molineux, G.N.

By invitation: Councillor Mrs. M.A. Davis, Health and Wellbeing
Portfolio Holder

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor F.W.C. Allen.

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

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

3. Minutes

AGREED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February, 2012 be approved as a correct record.

4. Empty Properties

Steve Shilvock, Head of Environmental Health gave a presentation to Members of the Committee in respect of Empty Properties.

He reported that there were around 400 long term properties empty within the District; and those properties were distributed all over the District. Cannock Chase did not have a problem with entire blocks or streets of empty properties that blighted some Council areas. A number of those properties were in good condition and it was possible that they may not give rise to any complaints

unless their condition deteriorated.

The Council offered advice and assistance to encourage owners to bring properties back into use. Cabinet had approved a short term loan scheme that was being offered to the owners of suitable properties. However, there were potential issues if loans were not taken up, or costs were too high to bring properties back into a reasonable state of repair.

The Head of Environmental Health reported on the powers available to the Council in dealing with empty dwellings. They included Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs), compulsory purchase and enforced sale. There were also powers available to deal with insecure properties and those causing problems to adjoining properties.

It was explained that difficulties could be encountered where there was no obvious owner, and where no probate had been proved. Caution also needed to be exercised with respect to the cost of action taken.

Members expressed concern that certain properties were empty within the District and in a poor state of repair. They also referred to properties being empty due to elderly people being in care homes that may wish at some point to move back to their property. However, if they remained in a care home, the property would be used to fund their care.

Janet Baldasera, Housing Strategy Manager commented that the Council would only intervene if there was property in a poor state of repair, or if the family of the person wished to be assisted with letting the property in the short term.

5. Place, Priority Delivery Plan 2012-13

Consideration was given to the Performance Outturn for Quarter 3.

AGREED:

Members noted the Performance Outturn for Quarter 3.

6. Update on the Housing Implications of the Governments Welfare reform Agenda

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 6.1 – 6.15 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Janet Baldasera, Housing Strategy Manager presented the Report.

Members discussed the Social Sector Size Criteria and how the Council could help tenants who were under occupying large properties that wished to downsize. The Housing Strategy Manager commented that it was expected that there would be an increase in transfer requests and mutual exchanges. Applicants would also be requested to re-register as part of the Allocations Policy. She advised that Council tenants under occupying could take in a lodger,

although in some cases this could also have cost implications.

With regard to Universal Credits the Housing Strategy Manager informed the Committee that most households would not be eligible for direct payments and have their “former rent money” paid into their bank account. Only those that were classed as vulnerable would have their rent paid direct.

Members then discussed the impact the changes which welfare reform could have in terms of evictions and more households becoming homeless.

AGREED:

- (A) That the report be noted
- (B) That more intensive use of HomeSwapper and promotion of mutual exchanges take place
- (C) That consideration of mitigation measures emerging from pilot projects and best practice publications be given
- (D) That a review of the Council’s 50 week rent year be undertaken
- (E) That a further report be considered when the impact of the Social Sector Size Criteria and Overall Benefit Cap is more fully known

7. Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Families

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 7.1 – 7.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Housing Strategy Manager presented the Report.

Members of the Committee discussed the cost of furnishing the flat and the cost per week for the accommodation to be used by families. It was noted that eligible families were able to make a claim for housing benefit.

AGREED:

- (A) That the current position regarding the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless families be noted
- (B) That the Head of Housing following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader be requested to meet the £5,000 cost of furnishing the unfurnished flat at Festival Court, West Chadsmoor from the 2013-14 Homelessness Prevention Budget
- (C) That a further review of the use of the two, “homelessness flats” at Festival Court, West Chadsmoor be undertaken in October, 2013

8. Revised Powers to Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 8.1 – 8.7 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Ian Tennant, Head of Housing presented the Report.

AGREED:

- (A) That the proposed revised 'toolkit of powers' to tackle anti-social behaviour included in the draft Anti-Social Behaviour Bill be noted
- (B) That subject to the proposed legislation being enacted, a further report is submitted on the use of the powers in relation to the Council's housing stock

9. Revised Work Programme 2012-13 Municipal Year

Consideration as given to the Revised Work Programme 2012-13 Municipal Year (Enclosure 9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

AGREED:

Members noted the Work Programme which had been undertaken by the Committee during the 2012-13 Municipal Year.

CHAIRMAN

(The meeting concluded at 5.00 p.m.).