

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

5th October 2017

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Hewlett (Chairman), Councillor Smith (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Atkin (substituting for Councillor Grant), Billings, Coe, Mrs Coyle, MacPherson, Muller and Mrs Wyatt

Labour Group

Councillors Dunn (substituting for Councillor Taylor), Rhind, Richards and Shepherd

In attendance

Councillor Mrs Coe (Conservative Group)

HCS/30 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grant (Conservative Group) and Taylor (Labour Group)

HCS/31 **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th August 2017 were noted and approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

HCS/32 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Committee was informed that no declarations of interest had been received.

HCS/33 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the public had been received.

HCS/34 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

HCS/35 **REPORTS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There were no Overview and Scrutiny Reports to be submitted.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/36 **OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND COMMUNITY FACILITY STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Open Space and Facility Development Manager and the Director of Community and Planning Services presented the report to Committee.

Members queried or raised comments on the financial implications of implementing all the listed projects, the availability of match-funding, Section 106 funds, other sources of monies and the level of the Council's financial commitment.

Councillor Rhind queried the Swadlincote Woodlands project, the reported shortfall in funding and the feasibility of using sums from the Council's reserves to address the funding gap. The Director clarified the shortfall amount and that an application for Landfill Levy funds was being considered. Councillor Richards inquired as to whether any further Swadlincote based Section 106 funds could be allocated in this instance, concerned that such a well thought of project required completion and maintenance. The Director confirmed that Section 106 funding was not currently available, hence the consideration of other potential funding sources, but that the strategy would inform the deployment of future Section 106 fund allocations.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman led Members in thanking the Open Space and Facility Development Manager for her valued work and contributions, this being her last meeting prior to leaving the Council.

RESOLVED:-

Members approved the project list for the South Derbyshire Open Space, Sport & Community Facilities Strategy.

HCS/37 **DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS – DELIVERY OF THE 2017/18 ALLOCATION**

The Strategic Housing Manager presented the report to Committee.

Members queried how the Council had arrived at such an underspend position, the potential for completing the tender process in a timely manner, the on-costs for the technical officer post, whether the available funds could be appropriately expended in the allotted timescales, details of the application process and adaptations on properties with, or on, a first floor.

The Strategic Housing Manager and the Chief Executive clarified the various points, confirming that plans were being put in place to both speed up the process and allocate virtually all the available funds, if not all. Guidance notes detailing the application process would be circulated to Committee Members for information.

RESOLVED:-

- 1.1 Members approved the appointment of a Technical Officer (scale 6 – subject to Job Evaluation) on an 18 month fixed term contract to address the current underspend on mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and enable the expansion of the service and increased capacity within the team.**
- 1.2 Members reviewed and agreed adaptations to the existing grant administration process to remove the task of procuring each individual job. This will involve undertaking a larger procurement exercise to identify a small number of contractors who will work under a 2 year measured term contract (this will not include major adaptations over £25k which will still go out to tender on an individual basis).**
- 1.3 Members reviewed the use of the Better Care Fund allocation and the existing DFG policy and agreed that proposed revisions and amendments be brought back to this Committee in March 2018.**
- 1.4 That the appointment of the fixed term post to the Council's Establishment, together with the change in the Procurement procedure, is referred to the Finance and Management Committee.**

HCS/38 **IMPLICATIONS OF THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT 2017**

The Strategic Housing Manager presented the report to Committee, outlining the anticipated impact on the Council once the Act takes effect in April 2018.

The Chief Executive introduced a third recommendation for the Committee's consideration, requiring the submission of any requests to increase the establishment to the Finance and Management Committee.

Members raised queries relating to the training commitment, the preparedness of the Housing staff in view of the large increases in applications expected, proposed activity within the Act's given timescales, concerns surrounding the use of bed & breakfast establishments, the scale of the Council's duty within this area, the scale and scope of referrals from other agencies and the penalty element contained in the Act.

The Strategic Housing Manager addressed each point raised, pointing out that the aim was to greatly reduce the use of bed & breakfast establishments, sourcing other accommodation in conjunction with other housing suppliers, in addition to the Council's own stock and plans currently being put in place, six months before the Act takes effect. It was also explained that the Act would require a more proactive approach by those individual's reporting homelessness.

The Committee voted on both the additional recommendation and the substantive report's recommendations.

RESOLVED:-

- 1.1 Members noted the content of this report and the proposed amendments to the delivery of the Council's front line statutory homeless service**
- 1.2 Members granted approval for the Strategic Director to agree the use of the Flexible Support Grant, future DCLG grant allocation and homeless prevention budget to deliver the Act and its associated enhanced prevention services and review functions.**
- 1.3 That the Strategic Director submit any recommendations for any increase in the establishment to a future meeting of the Finance and Management Committee for consideration.**

HCS/39 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

RESOLVED:-

Members considered and approved the updated work programme.

HCS/40 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th August 2017 were received.

TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11

The Committee was informed that no questions had been received.

The Meeting terminated at 6.50pm.

COUNCILLOR J HEWLETT

CHAIRMAN