



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices • Ebley Mill • Ebley Wharf • Stroud • GL5 4UB

Tel: (01453) 754 351/754 321

www.stroud.gov.uk

Email: democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk

HOUSING COMMITTEE

22 September 2020

7.00 pm – 8.20 pm

Remote Meeting

Minutes

3

Membership

Councillor Mattie Ross (Chair)	P	Councillor Colin Fryer	P
Councillor Jenny Miles (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor Lindsey Green	P
Councillor Catherine Braun	P	Councillor Julie Job	P
Councillor Stephen Davies	P	Councillor Norman Kay	P
Councillor Jim Dewey	P	Councillor Gary Powell	P
Councillor Chas Fellows	A	Councillor Debbie Young	P

P = Present A = Absent

Officers in Attendance

Strategic Director of Communities
New Homes & Regeneration Manager
Head of Housing Services

Tenancy Operations Manager
Accountancy Manager
Democratic Services & Elections Officer

Other Member(s) in Attendance

Councillor Doina Cornell

HC.001

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from the Tenant Representatives, Leticia Gardiner and Sandra Longstreth.

HC.002

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

HC.003

MINUTES

Councillor Catherine Braun raised a question about the Tenants Energy Survey that was discussed at Housing Committee in December 2019 and asked that it be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED **That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2019 are approved as a correct record**

HC.004 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

HC.005 STRATEGY FOR NEW COUNCIL HOMES

The New Homes & Regeneration Manager introduced the above report and stated that the Council had by 2019 added 239 new homes to its housing stock. The Council had reached its borrowing cap by 2018; but following the Governments abolition of the spending cap in October 2018, the Council approved a budget of £22.8m for a further 111 new homes over the next four years with a land acquisition fund of £3m.

The Strategy would seek to deliver seven strategic objectives which were set out in the appendix to the report and included a robust action plan to ensure delivery which would be reported annually to the Housing Committee. Members were informed that the Head of Property Services had existing delegation to purchase property on the open market up to a value of £500,000, land and property purchases above that value would be referred to committee.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the budget was for 111 new homes and that the Council would also be looking at other sites. The rents to be charged across these new homes would be affordable rents.

Members asked questions about how the building programme would impact on the Council's target for being carbon neutral. It was noted that there would need to be a business case for any project, with checks and balances built into the process. As the new build programme is based on borrowing over the long term, once the borrowing is paid back the increased rental from the new homes would assist with supporting the HRA. It was noted that there would be a move away from gas as an energy source with air source heat pumps being installed on the next schemes and other technologies would be reviewed.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried, ten for with one abstention.

- RESOLVED**
- a. Adopt the Strategy for New Council Homes and Action Plan**
 - b. Notes the delegation approved by Council in the Capital Strategy that land / property purchases, above the existing delegation of £500,000, will be presented to Strategy and Resources Committee for approval except for those occasions where insufficient time is available for a capital purchase to go through the full Committee cycle, and these decisions will be made by the Section 151 Officer and Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee. This only applies where there is an existing budget approved by full Council which may be used.**

HC.006 **TENANT SERVICES FRAUD POLICY**

The Tenancy Operations Manager stated that the previous policy had been adopted by the Housing Committee in 2013 and a revised version was presented to Committee in 2017. At that time Members considered that the policy was not sufficiently robust. This new policy had more specific detail and had been produced with the involvement of tenants.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the Council was a member of a group of housing providers and that the group were able to benchmark their performance, share data and assess the effectiveness of policies. It was also confirmed that investigation interviews were conducted under caution, in partnership with the Counter Fraud Team. The Tenancy Operations Manager agreed to report back on the PACE training undertaken by Officers and the number of fraud cases.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED **To adopt the revised Tenant Services Fraud Policy.**

HC.007 **MEMBER REPORTS**

- a. Housing Review Panel
A meeting had not taken place so no report was provided.
- b. Tenant Representatives verbal update
An email update was provided by Leticia Gardiner and sent to Members.
- c. Performance Monitoring

Councillor Davies commented on a productive meeting that he and Councillor Green had held with officers. The report noted the reduction in repair work undertaken during the pandemic. The tremendous effort from all Officers during the lockdown had been noted by Members.

HC.008 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced the report and commented on a busy programme of work. It was noted that a report was programmed for the December Meeting which would include the Climate Strategy. Members highlighted an emerging theme around 'Retro Fit' and how the Council could influence support across the district.

HC.009 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Member questions were submitted by Councillor Kay. They were answered by The Chair, Councillor Ross. (Refer to the [recording of the meeting](#)). Councillor Kay commented his surprise at the response and advised he would follow this up.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.

Chair