

HOUSING COMMITTEE

23 June 2015

7.00 pm – 9.43 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

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Minutes

Membership:

Councillor Mattie Ross (Chair)	P	Councillor Liz Peters	P
Councillor Doina Cornell (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor Gary Powell	P
Councillor Miranda Clifton	P	Councillor Lesley Reeves	P
Councillor Gordon Craig	P	Councillor Mark Rees	P
Councillor Kevin Cranston	P	Councillor Emma Sims	A
Councillor Jonathan Edmunds	P	Councillor Debbie Young	P

P = Present A = Absent

Other Councillors Present:

Councillors Tom Williams and Liz Ashton

Officers Present:

Strategic Head (Corporate Services)	Lead Business Consultant
Head of Housing Contracts (Interim)	Contracts Manager
Head of Housing Management	Business Development Manager
Principal Accountant	

Councillor Mattie Ross welcomed Ian Allan, Chair of Stroud Council Housing Forum.

HC.001 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Emma Sims.

HC.002 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none

HC.003 MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 March 2015 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

HC.004 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None received.

HC.005 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The meeting considered the Committee's work programme and updated it accordingly.

The Task and Finish Group on the effectiveness of tenant consultation mechanisms were asked to give an update to Committee in December.

Committee considered a joint meeting of Housing and Community and Licensing Committees should take place to discuss the impact of Welfare Reform, Universal Credit, Social Sector Size Criteria and Discretionary Housing Payments.

RESOLVED **To note the work programme, subject to the inclusion of the above in the 2015/16 work programme.**

HC.006 **PERFORMANCE FOR 2014/15**

Councillors Lesley Reeves and Debbie Young did not give a report as this was done at the previous Housing Committee. There had not been a monitoring meeting since that time and Councillor Young asked that the meetings be scheduled two to three weeks before Housing Committee in future.

HC.007 **APPOINTMENTS OF PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPRESENTATIVES**

RESOLVED **Councillors Gordon Craig and Debbie Young were appointed the representatives for 2015/16.**

HC.008 **APPOINTMENT OF OUTSIDE BODIES 2015/16**

Councillor Liz Ashton was the representative for Home Start Stroud and Dursley and gave a report on the progress of the organisation and how it helps the local communities.

Representatives were sought for Care and Repair Stroud and Home Start Stroud and Dursley.

RESOLVED **To make the following appointments**

Councillor Gary Powell – Care and Repair Stroud
Councillor Liz Ashton – Home Start Stroud and Dursley

HC.009 **NEW HOMES AND REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Business Development Manager gave an update on the schemes in the programme:

- Littlecombe – 10 properties were agreed for shared ownership, 3 sold with reservations on the others.
- Minchinhampton – 7 out of the 9 properties for shared ownership have been reserved.
- Top of Town, Stroud is due to complete in November, beginning to concentrate on Phase 2.
- Mankley Road, Leonard Stanley – contract has been awarded to Lovell Partnership.
- Chapel Street, Cam – Planning permission has now been received.
- Fountain Crescent – There is now an opportunity to purchase more land which would increase the scheme of 21 new homes.

Members commented that local people should always be able to afford to live in the area. The Local Lettings Policy would be discussed at an information evening on 8 July 2015. The Business Improvement Manager explained there was an opportunity to bid for additional grant funding which would enable the scheme to increase the supply of more affordable homes.

- RESOLVED**
- (a) **To note the current progress with the New Homes & Regeneration Programme.**
 - (b) **To approve SDC's bid to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) through their Continuous Market Engagement (CME) process at the appropriate time for any units in the programme that do not currently have an allocation of grant funding, noting in particular the requirement to charge an affordable rent on new build homes, but not for existing residents returning to new homes.**

HC.010 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) OUTTURN 2014/15

The Principal Accountant presented his report.

Discussion took place on decent homes and void properties, the cost of getting the homes up to standard and whether there would be value in renovating non-traditional properties.

RESOLVED **To note the position of actual income and expenditure on the HRA for 2014/15 as set out in table.**

RECOMMENDED **To Strategy and Resources Committee that HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2015/16 be increased by revenue carry forwards of £71k and capital slippage of £1,423k, as listed in table 5.**

HC.011 NEW HOUSING CONTRACTS FOR NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE DISTRICT

The Head of Housing Contracts presented his report and introduced the Empty Homes Manager who had been leading in setting up the contracts.

Committee were informed of two new housing contracts to be let in March 2016 for the north and south of the district, to a maximum value of £80m, which incorporated a number of contracts currently in place. The Empty Homes Manager explained the contracts are in the early stages. Officers are currently preparing the PPQ for issuing on OJEU.

Discussion took place on whether priority will be given to contractors who would offer local apprenticeships. If the council required contractors to offer a high level of apprenticeships within the schemes it should be understood that the tender price would increase. The current contract requires one apprentice per £million of the contract value. The work of contractors would be monitored closely and response times for faults would be built into the contract. The Empty Homes Manager was asked a question regarding timber specification; an answer was to be given to Members following the meeting.

RESOLVED **that delegated authority is given to the Head of Housing Contracts in consultation with the Strategic Head (Finance and Business Services) to carry out the procurement outlined in the report.**

HC.012 **INVESTMENT IN INFORMATION AND BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT TO SUPPORT TENANT SERVICES**

The Lead Business Consultant presented his report. He explained that there is a small team of staff from the HRA and General Fund. The project is to look at the business processes in Tenant Services and the best way to deliver these services. Once this work had been done, an IT system would be procured to back up the processes.

Communication with Members on this project would be through information sheets.

- RESOLVED:**
- (a) To approve the programme of business and ICT investments as outlined in the report.**
 - (b) To agree the utilisation of the budgeted reserves for the project.**
 - (c) To approve the communication strategy for updates to members and stakeholders.**

HC.013 **SHELTERED HOUSING ASSET REVIEW**

The Head of Housing Management gave a presentation on the review, to ascertain how the Council moves forward to bring the properties to an acceptable standard for sheltered housing. Members would receive a further report on the project in September.

The Chair of Stroud Council Housing Forum commented that he thought the Council were too cautious when working with tenants and were a very good landlord, tenants would accept change.

HC.014 **SUPPORTING TENANTS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STROUD VALLEYS CREDIT UNION**

The Head of Housing Contracts presented the report. Universal credit would be introduced in Stroud in 2015, the Council wants to ensure that tenants are being given the best opportunity to manage their benefits. The credit union would help people to manage a 'jam jar' account and would be able to set up direct debits.

It was proposed that the £11,000 would be taken from the Environmental fund which is a fund for tenants to help them make their communities a good place to live. Members requested that they receive a report on the spending of the Environmental Fund and a business plan on how the Credit Union would help tenants.

After a long discussion an amendment was made to the decision, which was proposed and seconded

- RESOLVED** **Following a discussion with the Stroud Valley Credit Union and the presentation of a business plan, the budget will be made available after a further report to Stroud Council Housing Forum and Housing Committee, has been presented and approved.**

Meeting ended at 9.43 pm.

Chair