

20 JANUARY 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 20 January 2021

- * Cllr Steve Davies (Chairman)
- * Cllr Ann Sevier (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- Anne Corbridge
- * Kate Crisell
- * Jack Davies
- * Andrew Gossage

Councillors:

- * Joshua Kidd
- Ian Murray
- * Caroline Rackham
- * Christine Ward

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

- Diane Andrews
- Ann Bellows
- Sue Bennison
- Jill Cleary
- Barry Dunning
- David Hawkins
- Martyn Levitt

Officers Attending:

Brian Byrne, Tim Davis, Richard Fudge, Kevin Green, Richard Knott, Grainne O'Rourke, Daniel Reynafarje, Ritchie Thomson and Karen Wardle

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Corbridge.

73 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

74 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by members in connection with an agenda item.

75 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised in the public participation period.

76 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND THE HOUSING PUBLIC SECTOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME FOR 2021/22

The Panel considered the proposed Housing Revenue Account budget and the housing capital expenditure programme for 2021/22.

It was noted that the budget proposed a social rent increase of 1.5%, in line with the recommendation from Government. This would be the second annual increase in social rents, following a four-year period where the social rents were reduced annually (by 1% each year). Service charges were proposed to have an inflationary increase of 0.5% and a review of service charges would be carried out in 2021/22. There would be no change to garage rents. The estimated HRA income for 2021/22 was noted to be £873,000 higher than the original budget for 2020/21.

The HRA expenditure budget for 2021/22 was proposed to be increased, and within this there would be an additional £647,000 in resources available for the capital development programme, which supported the Housing Strategy.

Views on the report had been received from the Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) and it was noted that the TIG recognised the fact that maintenance costs increase over time. The Tenant Representatives felt that the proposals were appropriate and sensible and supported the proposals within the HRA budget and the capital expenditure programme for 2021/22.

Support was expressed regarding the proposed social rent increase in recognition of the need to continue to maintain homes to the decent homes standard and that the stock condition survey had identified improvements which needed to be made to the Council's housing stock. An alternative view was expressed by two members of the Panel who felt that the social rents should be frozen for a year, and that the proposed rise to social rents would negatively impact those tenants who were currently struggling in the coronavirus pandemic.

The planned maintenance and improvement programme was noted. Members questioned the increase in budget for miscellaneous works, over the three year period. This had been identified as part of the continuous improvements to the Council's housing stock and the acceleration of the programme of works arising from the stock condition survey. It was anticipated that additional unplanned works could arise whilst other improvement works were being carried out.

£500,000 had been identified in the capital programme for 2021/22 Greener Housing Initiatives. The Council had bid for Government funding of £280,000 towards the provision of air source heat pumps on some of the Council's more rural properties and those which were 'off gas'. Those who were in fuel poverty with an annual income of less than £30,000 were specifically targeted.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Revenue Account budget and Housing Public Sector Capital Expenditure Programme 2021/22 be noted and supported.

77 TELECARE INFRASTRUCTURE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

The Panel received a presentation on the proposals to replace the Council's telecare infrastructure. The presentation is attached to the minutes as an Appendix.

The Council's Housing Service provided a number of door entry, fire alarm monitoring and alarm services for housing stock across the District, as well as providing the Appletree Careline service to approximately 2,000 people. The buildings which were monitored included communal or shared access properties which primarily accommodated age restricted or more vulnerable homeless clients.

The current services rely on analogue technology. Nationally, BT had announced they would switch off the analogue system in 2025 and that future delivery of services would need to be made over a digital network. This was the main driver for change as this would render all existing analogue solutions incompatible with a new digital network, rendering the current system inoperable from 2025.

In addition, NFDC's hardware infrastructure in its housing blocks had become outdated and was no longer cost effective in terms of repairs and investment. When faults occurred, it was becoming increasingly common that parts were no longer available or extremely hard to obtain. This was not sustainable for the future.

The Panel noted that these monitoring services could currently only be provided from within Appletree Court, however the coronavirus pandemic had demonstrated the need to provide resilience and increase the operational ability of delivering Careline and monitoring services remotely, were required.

A system was therefore needed which would be robust and fit for the future. A programme of work had been identified which included the replacement of the current systems across the Council's housing stock in order to be digitally compliant by 2025. Bridging software and hardware, converting analogue to digital, would be procured to allow the continuing use of existing monitoring units in customers' home, up to their normal operating life, which would provide significant cost savings. Whilst there was a cost associated with the replacement of the telecare infrastructure, there would be future savings in relation to maintenance by removing the expensive and outdated equipment.

The Panel noted the work proposed to be carried out over the next financial year and beyond. The Panel acknowledged the importance of the need to replace the ageing infrastructure. A procurement exercise would be carried out, and following appointment of a supplier, implementation would commence as soon as it would be possible to do so within the following the 2021/22 financial year.

The Panel expressed their support to the replacement of the telecare infrastructure and requested that an update be provided to the meeting in September 2021.

78 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

An update was provided on homelessness. The presentation is attached to these minutes as an Appendix.

It was noted that the new housing allocation system had been launched a year ago, which managed all applications online, including the bidding for properties. There were currently 1,239 live applications. 245 applicants had been rehoused since January 2020 across all four housing allocation bands.

There were currently 12 rough sleepers in the District, of which five had firm accommodation plans. Some of the rough sleepers had declined offers of support but officers would still work to support them.

The Panel noted that 154 households had been provided with emergency accommodation since 1 March 2020 and that 50 householders were currently in external temporary accommodation. It was expected that more Council owned temporary accommodation would become available during 2021/22 to reduce the need for use of external B&B accommodation.

Officers were meeting fortnightly with MHCLG advisors to discuss additional funding options, specialist roles and prevention activities in relation to homelessness.

Members questioned the number of rough sleepers recorded in recent months compared with other months. It was noted that in March 2020 the District Council accommodated 35 rough sleepers, however, in general there were circa 10-12 each at any one time. It was acknowledged that 22 rough sleepers had been recorded in November 2020, however this had been addressed quickly by the homelessness team.

79 HOUSING STRATEGY / HRA PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation regarding the property development and acquisition of properties within the HRA. The presentation is attached to the minutes as an Appendix.

There were various projects for refurbishment and temporary accommodation. It was anticipated that the Heather Road scheme in Blackfield would provide five units of shared accommodation and would be ready for occupation in March.

In relation to the Council's new build properties, two units of shared ownership had been marketed at Mulberry Close in Blackfield and a positive response had been received in relation to these. The Panel noted the proposals for redevelopment of Testwood Social Club to provide low carbon housing, to be built to the Future Homes Standard.

It was anticipated that around 200 additional affordable homes would have completed by the end of the financial year. Taking these and other speculative opportunities into account, the present potential pipeline stood at 473 affordable homes, albeit made up from openings at different stages and with varying degrees of certainty.

80 PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATES

The Portfolio Holder reported that the housing services team had continued to provide exceptional services to tenants in a professional manner. New homes were being delivered and the homelessness team were working hard to ensure that there was no need for rough sleepers to be on the streets.

She highlighted and praised the work of the housing maintenance team. Essential maintenance works and repairs continued to take place in order for tenants to have homes which were safe and warm. Void properties continued to be relet.

Operational staff were working to the highest hygiene standards, observing social distancing when entering tenants' properties wearing face coverings to give the tenant reassurance and in order to keep members of staff safe from the risk of coronavirus.

She praised the housing officers for doing all they could to maintain excellent services and invited the support of the Panel in thanking them.

81 WORK PROGRAMME

A performance dashboard for Housing Services, highlighting the progress of priorities identified within the Corporate Plan had been attached to the work programme. It was noted that the Panel could review the progress of these priorities at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed with the inclusion of the telecare infrastructure replacement project to the meeting in September 2021.

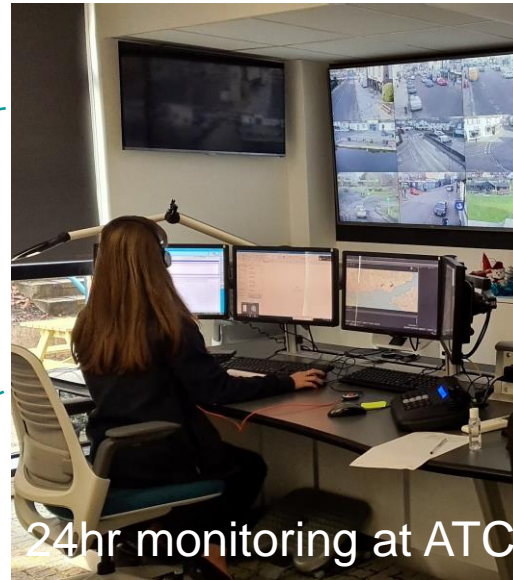
CHAIRMAN

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Telecare Infrastructure Replacement Project

Housing Services
Brian Byrne and
Richard Fudge

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE



CURRENT POSITION

- **BT switchover**

ISDN (Integrated Service Digital Network) PSTN (Public Switch Phone Network) Digital Service 2025

- End of analogue services
- Impact on careline monitoring services

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- **Alarm monitoring and door entry infrastructure**

Ageing system, increasing repair costs, difficulty with sourcing parts, not compatible with digital future

- **Inconsistency in monitoring**

A number of external sites are currently monitored by third parties (disaster recovery)

- **Fixed placed monitoring**

Staff can only operate at Appletree Court to undertake monitoring and delivery of careline services

THE FUTURE

- Renewal and replacement of hardwired infrastructure across housing stock. To future proof systems and be digital compliant for 2025
- Replace ageing and non-cost-effective systems
- Maintain all housing stock monitoring services via ATC (end third party monitoring services)
- Significant cost savings by maintaining analogue units through bridging software – prevents interruption to the delivery of essential careline services
- Improved disaster recovery and resilience in service through remote working capability
- Ability to deploy careline units without landline i.e. 4G increasing revenue streams
- Future cost savings through the removal of outdated and expensive equipment
- Future maintenance agreements will benefit from open protocol systems
- Reliable, robust infrastructure delivering an improved service with significant risk reductions.

WHAT NEXT?

Year 1 (from April 2021)

- Install and operate new ICT platform for Appletree careline to include digital bridge for existing dispersed alarm customers.
- Replace hardwired systems within the 3 extra care schemes, Winfrid House, Gore Grange and Barfields to include careline units, fire alarm monitoring and door entry system.
- Reroute communal lift monitoring alarms to Appletree Court Control Room.
- Replace existing monitored fire alarms with DUAL COM units (where required). All existing and future DUAL COM units to be monitored 24/7 by Appletree Court Control Room.

Following 2 years

- Remove ageing Tunstall equipment from across all housing stock.
- Review and where required upgrade door entry systems to decommissioned sheltered accommodation (x16).

ANY QUESTIONS ?

Homelessness Update

Richard Knott

Service Manager – Housing Options, Rents, Support and Private
Sector Housing

Housing Register

- 1,239 live applications

Band	Totals	%
1	21	1.7%
2	228	18.4%
3	351	28.3%
4	639	51.6%
Total	1,239	

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- 245 applicants rehoused since Jan 2020

Band	Totals	%
1	18	7.3%
2	104	42.4%
3	74	30.2%
4	49	20.0%
Total	245	

- 69 Full Duty Homeless cases moved on from TA

- Rough sleeping
 - Peak of 22 in November
 - 12 current rough sleepers
 - 5 with firm accommodation plans
 - 2 in vehicles
 - 3 refusing accommodation currently
 - 2 no contact
- 15 • 154 households provided Emergency Accommodation since 1st March 2020
- 50 households currently in External Accommodation
 - 5 families
 - 15 Single people accommodated March 2020 – August 2020
 - 11 males, 4 females
 - 17 single people accommodated August 2020 – December 2020
 - 14 males, 3 females
 - 13 single people accommodated December 2020 – today
 - 12 males, 1 couple

Next steps

- New TA coming thick and fast – reduce B&B usage
- Visiting staff put forward for vaccinations in priority group 2 - following up on those in shared accommodation
- Fortnightly meeting with MHCLG Advisors
 - Discussing funding options year 4
 - Extend current support team for further year
 - Additional specialist qualified roles - MH & Drug and Alcohol
 - Prevention activities
- £36,000 to fund additional worker
 - started 30 November
- Homelessness Officer leaving after 30 years – will replace with FT Officer

Property Development and Acquisition update

January 2021

Minute Item 79



Refurbishment and Temporary Accommodation Schemes

Tourlands, Emsworth Road, Lymington	3 x flatlets and 3 x shared
38/40 Ambleside, Lymington	2 x 3 bedroom semi-detached
Heather Road, Blackfield	5 x shared accommodation
110 Christchurch Road, Ringwood	7 x shared accommodation
Blease Court, Lymington	7 x flatlets
Clover Court, New Milton	1 x family bungalow

New-Build: 'Off the shelf', S106 and commissioned

Mulberry Close, Blackfield	2 x rented/2 x shared ownership
Kennard Road, New Milton	11 x flats and coach house
Crow Lane, Ringwood	7 x rented (S106)
37/39 Salisbury Road, Totton	16/18 (?) x rented
Testwood Club, Totton	12 x rented
Ladycross, Hythe	4 x 2 bed & 2 x 3 bed houses
Plus offers being made.....	

Affordable Housing Development Programme as at 20th January 2021

2018/19 and 2019/20 completions	147
“In contract” or completed (2020/21)	55
“Predicted with delivery expectations”	140
“Future programme potential”	131
Total	473