

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS) held as a Remote Meeting via Zoom on Thursday, 4 March 2021

PRESENT: Councillor D M Tysoe – Chairman.

Councillors T D Alban, B S Banks, S J Criswell, J W Davies, Ms A Diaz, Mrs A Dickinson, D A Giles, Mrs S Smith and Mrs S R Wilson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor R Fuller.

43 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

45 NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st March 2021 to 30th June 2021.

Following a query by the Chairman, it was confirmed that the Digital Strategy would be presented to Members by the end of quarter 1 of 2021/22.

46 URGENT ITEM - CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mrs S R Wilson be appointed as a non-voting co-opted Member to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee and that Councillor Mrs S Smith be appointed as the substitute Member.

47 LETTINGS POLICY REVIEW

By means of a report by the Housing Needs and Resources Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Lettings Policy Review was presented to the Panel. During the introduction it was explained to Members that there are two specific amendments to the Lettings Policy, these are relating to ex-partners/spouses of military personnel and local connection through employment. In addition to this Members were informed that there are several wording changes in for clarification purposes.

Comments were made by Councillors Smith and Wilson that the Policy reads well and is clear to follow.

Following a question, from Councillor Diaz, in relation to whether applicants who require additional support could receive that support during the renewal process, Members were informed that applicants could receive assistance from a support worker or a family member so long as they have indicated that they require support at the point of original application.

In response to a question, from Councillor Alban, on whether the wording could be clearer in relation to an applicant's connection with the area via Ministry of Defence, it was clarified that where it states 'death was attributable to that service', this means death in service.

The Panel

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to approve the amended Lettings Policy.

48 LOCAL LETTINGS PLANS - ALCONBURY WEALD AND FUTURE PLANS

Consideration was given to a report on the Local Lettings Plans – Alconbury Weald and Future Plans by the Housing Needs and Resources Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). It was explained to the Panel that where a block of affordable housing is released on a development, the local lettings plan allows the Council to create a balanced community.

Members were also informed that as it is anticipated that the need for local lettings plans will become more frequent, it is proposed that in future the authority to adopt local lettings plans will be delegated to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development.

In response to a question from Councillor Giles, on whether allocating affordable housing to applicants from lower bands frees up housing elsewhere, the Panel was informed that it could have that affect but it is not guaranteed.

Councillor Wilson welcomed the local lettings plan and stated that the previous plan for Bearscroft Farm (Romans Edge) was successful in creating a mixed and balanced community. In response to Councillor Wilson's question on how big a development has to be for a local lettings plan to be developed, the Panel was informed that the minimum size would be 60 units but there are developments of less than 60 where a local lettings plan might be appropriate.

Following a query, from Councillor Alban, regarding the opportunities that Members have to feed into future local lettings plans, it was confirmed that the decisions will be published on the Notice of Key Executive Decisions which is published on both Overview and Scrutiny Panel agendas each month.

A concern was raised by Councillor Wilson, in relation to the potential distortion of the housing waiting lists through the use of local lettings plans, however Members were reassured that legislation prevents Councils from using local lettings plans to override the general Lettings Policy. The Panel

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be encouraged to endorse the recommendation contained within the report.

49 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel.

A discussion ensued on the Flooding Review and the Panel was informed that Members of the Flooding Review had held productive discussions with Officers of Cambridgeshire County Council. Members were informed that several issues were discussed including clarity of guidance, how to manage the vulnerable and extra resourcing. The Panel was reminded that the Council are not the lead local flood authority and that the function lies with Cambridgeshire County Council.

Chairman