

BROADLAND CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Cabinet of Broadland District Council, held on Tuesday, 23 April 2024 at 6.00 pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: S Holland (Chairman), N Harpley (Vice-Chair), S Beadle, M Booth, J Davis, S Riley and D Roper

Also in Attendance: Councillors: M Murrell and F Whymark

Officers in Attendance: T Holden (Managing Director), D Lorimer (Director of Resources), J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), S Phelan (Assistant Director of Community Services), R Dunsire (Head of Housing and Benefits), R Fincham (Assistant Director of Finance), L Mockford (Governance Manager) and J Overy (Democratic Services Officer)

103. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

104. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised the meeting that the Committee had acknowledged the hard work of officers in drafting the housing reports that made up a large part of the agenda. Members had asked a lot of questions of the Head of Housing and Benefits and the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families had received satisfactory answers to them. All of the recommendations to Cabinet had unanimous.

105. REPRESENTATIONS FROM NON-CABINET MEMBERS

Cllr F Whymark confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had held a good meeting. He requested to speak on one of the exempt reports on the agenda after the exclusion of the press and public.

106. POLICY FOR RESIDENTS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

The Head of Housing and Benefits introduced the report, which explained that Broadland was working towards achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation by autumn 2024, and as part of this work it was proposed that a Policy on domestic abuse be adopted by the Council.

DAHA Accreditation (Foundation Level) was considered the benchmark for local authorities, and the proposed Policy would enhance the comprehensive support the Council offered residents experiencing domestic abuse. Several Housing Associations were also working towards DAHA accreditation.

Members were informed that domestic abuse was a significant problem and that in October 2023 the Council had recorded a 62 percent rise in domestic abuse, which was averaging 6 to 7 presentations a month many of which required temporary accommodation.

Members were also advised that the Policy included a Sanctuary Scheme, which allowed victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and was a scheme that Broadland had put more support into than any other local authority in Norfolk.

Domestic abuse training was mandatory for officers, and was available to members via the Skillgate online training course. Member training on domestic abuse awareness had been held in December 2023, but attendance had been disappointing. However, further training could be scheduled going forward.

The Portfolio for Housing and Communities noted the significant member input that had been taken on board when drafting the Policy.

It was,

RESOLVED

To agree the Policy for supporting residents experiencing domestic abuse.

Reasons for Decision

To adopt a Policy that aligns with the values of the Council and supports residents experiencing domestic abuse.

107. TENANCY POLICY

The Head of Housing and Benefits introduced the report which recommended adopting a Policy that would set out how the Council would meet the regulatory standards that all social landlords were expected to meet and was part of the Council's continued drive to improve support for its residents.

The Policy was applicable to tenants of the Council and clarified how Broadland would support tenancy sustainment, prevent unnecessary evictions, tackle tenancy fraud, and ensure the appropriate management of tenancies.

It was noted that the Council facilitated an extensive range of support to help residents maintain their tenancy.

Cabinet was reminded that many of the provisions set out in the Policy were not currently applicable, as the Council only held housing stock for the purposes of temporary accommodation, but it would meet ongoing requirements should this change in the future.

It was unanimously,

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To adopt the Tenancy Policy.

Reasons for Decision

To meet legislative requirements as a Registered Housing Provider.

108. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENT POLICY

The Head of Housing and Benefits introduced the report which recommended the adoption of a Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy to meet with the Council's statutory duty as a registered provider and clearly set out the key principles that would be adhered to when making temporary accommodation placements.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing emphasised that the Policy would take a common sense approach to placing people in suitable accommodation, and she had faith in officers to implement it with the care of residents in mind

It was unanimously,

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To adopt the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy.

Reasons for Decision

To meet legislative requirements and to set the standards that should be expected from the Council when making temporary accommodation placements.

109. PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR OFFER (PRSO) POLICY

The Head of Housing and Benefits introduced the report which proposed the adoption of a Policy on the fair use of the Private Rented Sector Offer. The Policy provided a framework for empowering people to move out of temporary accommodation into suitable private rented sector dwellings and discharge the Council's homelessness duty.

Cabinet was also reminded that encouraging residents who had sufficient income to rent private accommodation would reduce the pressure on scarce social housing stock.

In response to a query, the Head of Housing and Benefits confirmed that the first action taken by the Housing Team when informed of a resident's tenancy coming to an end was to contact the landlord to seek to prevent or delay an eviction, if this was not possible officers would seek to get them in an alternative property as soon as possible to avoid putting them into temporary accommodation.

It was unanimously,

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To adopt the Private Rented Sector Offer Policy.

Reasons for Decision

To extend the range of options available to the Council to discharge its homeless duties efficiently and fairly.

110. PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING INTERNAL (STATUTORY) REVIEWS OF HOMELESS DECISIONS

The Head of Housing and Benefits introduced the report, which proposed adopting a procedure for undertaking statutory reviews of homeless cases.

Members were advised that Broadland had no procedure set out within the Constitution in respect of Homelessness Reviews, which were currently being undertaken by officers, acting within a best practice model. The proposed procedure recommended that regular reports on the reviews undertaken be made to the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Council.

The Leader noted that was useful members to have an understanding of the homelessness review process and it was also noted that member involvement could reassure the public, as councillors were often the first point of contact by residents.

It was unanimously,

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

That the proposed process for undertaking statutory reviews of homeless cases is adopted and exceed the minimum statutory requirements by involving the Leader of the Council and relevant Portfolio Holder in six monthly reviews.

Reasons for Decision

To provide a consistency of approach in undertaking statutory reviews of homelessness appeals.

111. FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan.

It was requested that the Portfolio Holder for Finance be added to the report for the Robotic Processing Automation Business Case that was being considered at the 5 November 2024 meeting of Cabinet.

It was also suggested that the Leader replace the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development for the Plumstead Road Land Options report scheduled for 11 June 2024.

112. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business because otherwise, information which is exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, would be disclosed to them.

113. HOUSING SYSTEM PROCUREMENT

The Head of Housing and Benefits introduced the exempt report, which proposed the procurement of a housing data system to continue to process and support residents and assist the work of the Housing Team.

Members were advised that the new IT system would meet all the needs of the Housing Team and that a minimum contract of 2 + 1 + 1 years was preferred, as this would allow the flexibility to ensure that customers were getting the best service.

It was also explained that the system would help administer S106 regulations, which prioritised the housing allocation of residents according to their local connection to a parish and could be complex and time consuming if undertaken manually.

Cabinet was informed that a Housing Allocations Policy Review would be reported to Cabinet at the 16 July 2024 meeting.

RESOLVED

To agree to delegate authority to award the contract of the Housing System Solution, to the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families, in consultation with the S151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

Reasons for Decision

To procure a single system IT solution to support the statutory functions of the Housing Service.

114. FRETtenham DEPOT - AWARD OF REDEVELOPMENT CONTRACT

The Assistant Director for Community Services introduced the exempt report which provided an update on the work undertaken for the redevelopment works at the Frettenham depot.

Following discussion, as set out in the exempt minute, it was unanimously,

RESOLVED

1. Approve the utilisation of additional funding as set out in the table at 3.7 in the report from the Refuse Services Reserve required to complete the redevelopment of the Frettenham Depot now that all costs are known.
2. Delegate to the Assistant Director Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence, approval to utilise the project contingency if required.

Reasons for Decision

To ensure that the depot remains fit for purpose.

(The meeting concluded at 7.07 pm)

Chairman