

Minutes of Health & Housing Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, 31 March 2016, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor S Hore (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Bibby	K Hind
S Brunskill	R Newmark
P Elms	R Sherras
L Graves	J White

In attendance: Chief Executive, Head of Regeneration and Housing, Strategic Housing Officer.

667 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P Dobson, M Fenton, R Hargreaves, J Holgate, M Robinson.

668 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

669 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no pecuniary and non-pecuniary declarations of interest.

670 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

671 HOUSING DELIVERY PLAN 2016/2018

The Chief Executive submitted a report requesting Committee's approval of the Housing Delivery Plan setting out the key aims and objectives of the strategic housing service for the next 2 years. The plan period was limited to 2 years due to the speed of current changes in housing delivery. The plan had been prepared to identify strategic housing demands and requirements, to consider evidential requirements to support delivery of various projects, to promote better and warmer housing provision, and to address specialist housing needs in the borough including older households, homelessness and accommodation for vulnerable people.

Committee were informed that the funding for support to people with housing needs, including sheltered housing and accommodation for people with learning disabilities, came to a figure approaching £500,000 across the borough. This is due to finish March 2017. The new Housing Officer post currently being advertised would include elements of support and signposting where appropriate.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the actions and to monitor progress against delivery of the Action Plan.

672 ADDRESSING HOUSING NEEDS – STARTER HOMES

The Chief Executive submitted a report to inform Committee of Starter Homes as an affordable product, but evidencing how this tenure does not address affordable housing needs in the borough. The proposals in the Housing and Planning Bill differ from the Council's Addressing Housing Needs policy requirement for discount sales to be 30% from open market value in Clitheroe and Longridge and 40% across the remainder of the borough, to be maintained in perpetuity and for buyers with a local connection. The proposal in the Bill is for a minimum of 20% discount, with no requirement for local connection, and a restriction not to sell or let the property at its open market value for 5 years following the initial sale.

Developers had already sought to achieve the affordable homes element of schemes by the use of Starter Homes in accordance with the Bill, seeking 20% discounted sales. It was reported that currently no developer had gone against the Council's policy for shared ownership/rent for affordable housing, and in default of that being achieved to provide for discount sales at 30% or 40% with local connection and in perpetuity.

There was discussion about the consultation document issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2016, due for response by 18 May 2016. Concern was raised that refusal to accept Starter Homes with a 20% discount, for 5 years and with no local connection, as part of an affordable housing offer, in conflict with developing central policy, could be open to challenge. Issues were also raised about exceptions to the proposed scheme, including provision for prospective buyers leaving the armed forces.

RESOLVED: That

1. Committee agree that until Government Regulations are finalised on the Starter Homes Scheme, the existing Affordable Housing Policy of Ribble Valley Borough Council will continue;
2. the Strategic Housing Working Group respond to the consultation paper.

673 REGISTERING AS A REGISTERED PROVIDER

The Chief Executive submitted a report, proposing that Ribble Valley Borough Council proceed to register as a provider of affordable housing with the Department for Community and Local Government. Further investigation had taken place into the merits of registration, which could assist in addressing issues where other registered providers had failed to find buyers, meaning that they could no longer support the provision of affordable housing on development sites.

Resources for investment in the scheme would be through income from commuted sums of the affordable housing contribution from the site. The initial capital outlay plus on-costs would be recouped on first sale of the property. There had been positive reports on the use of this process from other authorities in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

There was discussion about maintenance obligations, which would rest with the occupiers for shared ownership properties and with the Council for rental properties. The Council would seek minimum space standards and quality of build before taking on a property. There was the possibility that developers might gift houses to Ribble Valley Borough Council to meet affordable housing obligations, rather than paying commuted sums for a site.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve that Ribble Valley Borough Council proceed to register as a registered provider of affordable housing.

674 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the schemes which had been approved for inclusion in the Capital Programme for this Committee for the 2016/17 financial year. This included 3 schemes which total £523,220 (including £175,000 for Clitheroe market improvements where the final plans were to be confirmed). Responsible officers would complete and update capital monitoring sheets for each scheme, which would be reported quarterly to Members to give an indication of progress. This was particularly important for the disabled facilities grants.

Committee were pleased to note the increase in disabled facilities grants allocation from £161,000 budgeted to £273,220.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

675 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

676 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the fact that the following items of business be an Exempt Information Under Categories 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

677 GENERAL REPORT – GRANTS

The Chief Executive submitted details of 5 disabled facilities grants and 3 boiler replacement grants. It was reported that 44 household applications had been made for flood resilience grants of which 6 had so far been approved, and that 5 business applications had been received of which 2 had been approved and 1 completed and payment made. Events had been held to publicise these grants, and it was hoped that owners of all eligible properties would apply.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

678 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee's information on affordable housing schemes in the borough. The minutes of the Strategic Housing Working Group of the 22 February 2016 were also included.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Marshal Scott (414400).