

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2022 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Ash Ashbee (Chair); Councillors Pugh, J Bayford, R Bayford, Kup and D Saunders

In Attendance: Councillors Crittenden, Everitt and Whitehead

797. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies made at the meeting.

798. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

799. MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

Councillor Ashbee proposed, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the extraordinary meeting held on 22 February 2022.

800. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Ashbee proposed, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 27 January 2022.

801. ADOPTION OF REVISED TENANCY STRATEGY & TENANCY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Cabinet considered proposal for the adoption of the Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Management Strategy. Adoption of this strategy would fulfil the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. The Council was required to develop and publish a Tenancy Strategy setting out the Council's preferred position on the type of tenancies granted by registered providers of social housing in the district. The strategy was advisory and used by social landlords as guidance.

The act also required the Council, as a social housing landlord itself, to produce a Management Policy which set out how Thanet District Council will operationally grant and manage tenancies. The Tenancy Strategy and Management Policy, last published by Thanet District Council in 2018, needed updating.

The Tenancy Strategy set out the council's position on the use of fixed term tenancies, affordable and social rents, mutual exchanges, succession rights and arrangements for dealing with tenancy fraud. In most respects the strategy recommended remained the same as that taken in 2018. One significant difference related to the use of fixed term tenancies. In light of national and local changes in attitude to their use, the cabinet report recommended that they should not be used as a preferred tenancy type.

One of the original objectives of fixed term tenancies was to enable social housing providers to make the best use of the social housing stock, and not renew tenancies when households no longer had a need for that home. In reality however this had not led to an increased turn-over of tenants, and social landlords had not used the legislation to end tenancies in this way.

Experiences from across social housing providers, including TDC, had identified a number of problems with the use of fixed term tenancies. These included:

- Tenants feeling concerned and anxious about their futures based on their tenure type;
- Lack of investment by families in their home and community because they feel they will have to move on;
- Little impact in terms of stock turnover and vacancies;
- Potential conflict with the Government priority to give tenants a stronger voice;
- Significant administrative costs involved with the scheme particularly where the majority of tenancies are set to continue.

Council had consulted with the tenants about the proposed new strategy. A small number of tenants contacted the council as a result of the consultation and expressed support for the proposal to end the use of fixed term tenancies.

Councillor Whitehead spoke under Council Procedure Rule 20.1.

Councillor Jill Bayford proposed, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and Cabinet agreed the following recommendations:

1. The contents of the draft Tenancy Strategy;
2. The contents of the draft Tenancy Management Policy.

802. BUDGET MONITORING 2021-22: REPORT NO.3

Cabinet discussed the Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring Report which covered quarter three general fund revenue and capital, reflecting the latest forecasts in the light of the covid pandemic, together with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and was the third budget monitor for 2021/22. Quarter 3 forecast was for a £1.95m overspend on this year's budget. The HRA forecast was for a £226,000 surplus against the budget.

Councillor Everitt spoke under Council Procedure Rule 20.1.

Councillor David Saunders proposed, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and Cabinet agreed the following:

1. That Cabinet notes the following:
 - (i) The General Fund revenue budget 2021-22 forecast position;
 - (ii) The General Fund Capital Programme 2021-22 forecast position;
 - (iii) The Housing Revenue Account position;
 - (iv) The anticipated funding solution to the budget gap.
2. The 2021-22 Capital Programme budget adjustments and virements, numbered 1 and 2, as set out in section 5.3 and Annex 1 to the Cabinet report;
3. To recommend to Council for approval the 2021-22 supplementary capital budget, numbered 3 as set out in section 5.4 and Annex 1 to the Cabinet report.

803. ADOPTION OF THE FOLLOWING POLICIES: ASB, RECHARGEABLE WORKS, INCOME COLLECTION, AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS

Members discussed proposals for, four policies covering aspects of the council's tenant and leaseholder service. The four policies are:

- Income recovery, including enforcement and evictions;

- Rechargeable works orders;
- Antisocial behaviour;
- Aids and Adaptations.

The policies had been reviewed by the Thanet Tenants and Leaseholders Group, the Housing Cabinet Advisory Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. As key policies they were important documents that set out the standards that the Council will provide these services to, for tenants and leaseholders. It was important that tenants and leaseholders knew what to expect from the service. The policies also provided officers with the tools they needed to enable them to carry out their jobs.

The policies were set up to be easy to understand and were as succinct as possible. Some of the wording would be revised to remove any words that might be used to stigmatise individuals. These policies would then be published on the council's website and become accessible to tenants and leaseholders.

Councillor Whitehead spoke under Council Procedure Rule 20.1.

Councillor Jill Bayford proposed, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and Cabinet agreed to adopt and publish the four policies.

804. TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER SERVICES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (TLS KPI) QUARTER 3

Cabinet discussed the performance report for Quarter 3 and covered council's progress on tenant and leaseholder health and safety compliance and provided an update on the overall performance of the tenant and leaseholder service. Cabinet was pleased to announce that the regulatory notice that was placed on the Council in 2019 was removed on the 24 February 2022. This had been accomplished by the hard work and dedication of the entire team, who had pulled together to improve the position on Landlord Compliance.

The performance report showed that most work streams were operating as business as usual, but two areas that were still in recovery were electrical safety and fire risk assessment actions. The team had a robust action plan in place to resolve by the end of March 2022 and were making good progress. More widely, the team's performance remained steady in most areas for Quarter 3. The planned works programme was progressing as expected with only 2 projects that were experiencing delays:

- At Royal Crescent, in Ramsgate, there had been a delay with the tender documents due to the complexity of the works required and the need to carry out additional inspections and surveys. It was anticipated being ready to procure for this project in April 2022.
- At Churchfields, in Margate, a fire risk assessment identified a lack of compartmentation in the loft space. This therefore had to be resolved as an emergency project and the compartmentation works were being completed now. The planned project for new bin stores and parking that was approved by Cabinet in November will be planned into the 2022/23 programme.

The report also identified areas of performance that needed to improve. One key area for improvement was the turnaround time for void properties. Disappointingly for the team this had not improved since transition. To address this they had restructured to create a dedicated voids team and changed the way they work with their contractors to complete void works. Further work to improve turnaround times was taking place during Q4 as the team streamlined processes, systems and communication.

The rent arrears position had declined in Quarter 3 when compared to Quarter 2. This was an area that had previously been improving since transition. However, the position was better than their position at Quarter 3 last year; and comparison with previous years and other providers showed that an increase in arrears during Quarter 3, which included the Christmas period, was not unusual.

Councillor Jill Bayford proposed, Councillor Kup seconded and Cabinet noted the performance report.

805. RAMSGATE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Leader proposed to recommend to Full Council for the adoption of the Ramsgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. This followed a public consultation of the documents, which were produced as part of the Ramsgate Heritage Action Zone (the "HAZ") work, at the end of last year.

Since being designated in 1970 and subsequently extended 5 times, there had not been an appraisal of the Conservation area in Ramsgate. The appraisal and plan were produced from the work of the local community and supporting consultants, to provide a highly detailed evaluation of the features and character that made the Ramsgate Conservation area so important.

This piece of work had been ongoing across different administrations of the Council, and Cabinet thanked the local community, especially the Ramsgate Society and Ramsgate Heritage and Design Forum, whose voluntary work made this appraisal possible. The report outlined the background behind the HAZ and the appraisal, provided a summary of the structure of the appraisal and the key recommendations from the management plan produced for all stakeholders.

The report outlined the results of the consultation which occurred between 1 November and 13 December last year, which was supportive of the appraisal and management plan, as well as the guidance for climate change adaptation and draft conservation area owners guidance. Points of concern and suggestions for future heritage designation and projects had also been outlined and these points would be used to inform the Council's work going forward.

The document would now form an important reference document to positively aid residents and developers when they were looking to carry out works in the Ramsgate Conservation Area. It would also provide evidence to support the planning decisions of the Council and a framework for future heritage initiatives.

Councillor Crittenden spoke under Council Procedure Rule 20.1.

Councillor Ashbee proposed, Councillor Saunders seconded and Cabinet agreed that the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, and associated documents, as appended to the Cabinet report, be agreed and moved to Full Council for adoption and published by 1 May 2022.

806. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Councillor Ashbee proposed, Councillor Pugh seconded and Cabinet agreed that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for agenda item 11 as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1, of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Live streaming of the meeting was ended and Cabinet went into a private session.

807. REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

Cabinet considered the officer report and agreed a way forward.

Meeting concluded: 7.30 pm