
MEETING	EXECUTIVE MEMBERS FOR HOUSING & ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES AND ADVISORY PANEL
DATE	26 MARCH 2007
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS GREENWOOD (CHAIR), SUE GALLOWAY (EXECUTIVE MEMBER), SUNDERLAND (EXECUTIVE MEMBER), FAIRCLOUGH, NIMMO, FRASER, HORTON AND HILL MRS MILDRED GRUNDY (CO-OPTED NON- STATUTORY MEMBER) AND MS PAT HOLMES (CO-OPTED NON-STATUTORY MEMBER)

73. Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

Cllr Fraser declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 4 (Minute 76 refers) as a council nominee on the board of the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS).

74. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 15 January 2007 be approved and signed as a correct record.

75. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation scheme.

76. Financial Support to Voluntary Organisations 2007/08 (Social Services and Housing)

Members considered a report which presented requests received from local organisations for financial support in 2007/2008. The Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services were asked to agree the recommendations for Financial Support contained within this report.

The budget for Financial Support for the voluntary sector had been set at £83,810 for social services and £8,420 for housing related services. Applications for Financial Support had been received from 8 social care organisations, totalling £79,499. One application was received from a housing organisation with a request for £8,673.

Members were presented with two options:

Option 1 – To award Financial Support as indicated in paragraphs 46 and 48 of the report to all organisations including Survive.

Option 2 – To award Financial Support to organisations as detailed at paragraphs 46 and 48 of the report with the exception of Survive. The balance of the budget to be utilised for funding small one-off grants during the financial year.

It was queried as to what other sources of funding were available to Survive to enable them to expand. It was reported that they had lost a lot of National Lottery and other funding but had stabilised themselves and were looking to expand again. There were other sources of funding but that they had been turned down so far. Officers would provide support to Survive to help them find alternative funding, although there was no guarantee they would receive any.

Concern was raised about whether there was any overlap in funding to voluntary organisations from the Council and North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust (PCT). It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have a joint programme with the PCT for providing financial support to voluntary organisations from 2008/09.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services be advised

- (i) To agree with Option 2 and award Financial Support as detailed in paragraphs 46 and 48 of this report;
- (ii) To request that officers consult with North Yorkshire and York PCT to find a common pathway for providing financial support to voluntary organisations, for implementation from 2008/09.

Decision of the Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To continue Financial Support to the Voluntary Sector.

77. Housing and Adult Social Services Departmental Plan

Members considered a report which advised the Executive Members of the key strategic issues facing housing and adult social care in the next few years and how these high level issues link the 6 service plans for 2007-10.

Six service plans were produced for approval to cover the period 2007-10 and attached as annexes to this report. However, there was a danger that these were seen as separate plans as the links were not apparent. To try and make this clearer and more explicit the departmental management team had identified 5 High Level themes that summarise the future developments in HASS :

- Long Term Planning for Change
- Independence, Choice and Control
- Preventative Strategy
- Quality and Excellence
- Customer Involvement and Participation

These were set out in more detail in Annex 1 with key examples of work-streams in the 6 service plans that needed to be seen as linking across the department.

Officers reported that Annexes 5 and 6 were incomplete and had information missing from the Resources section. Revised copies would be circulated to Members.

Members queried about whether officers had filled the staffing vacancy for the Approved Social Worker in Mental Health Services which was critical for meeting statutory obligations. It was reported that officers had recruited two new social workers recently.

Members raised concerns about the appointments which were not being filled in the PCT, and that the council needed to watch this closely as a lot of the mental health services were provided by the PCT. Concern was also raised about the PCT not consulting the council in relation to the appointment for an Assistant Director for Mental Health, which had previously been unsuccessful. It was raised that the council would want to be involved in this in future as the post would be managing council staff. The Director for Housing and Adult Social Services reported that he would be writing to the Chief Executive of the PCT to express concern over the lack of consultation about the appointment to that post.

It was queried how officers intended to promote community involvement and generate a sense of community. Officers reported that the Local Area Agreement (LAA) was one area that could be use, along with having a dialogue with ward committees and neighbourhoods regarding any issues of concern, such as health, care of vulnerable people, or food and diet for children. It was suggested that Neighbourhood Watch and other organisations, such as church organisations, could also be used as a source for dialogue on these issues.

Members queried what was being done to improve opportunities for affordable housing in the city in order to achieve the 50% target. Officers reported that they would be working with developers to see how they could increase the amount of affordable housing made available on developments to meet the 50% target. It was raised that the lengthy planning inquiries into proposed developments such as Germany Beck and Derwenthorpe had impacted on the current figure of affordable homes being secured on new developments.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services be advised to note the report.

Decision of the Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: So that the Executive Members be briefed on the key challenges facing housing and adult social care in the next few years.

78. Adaptation of Existing Hostel Units (Ordnance Lane Hostel)

Members considered a report which proposed the conversion of a 2 bedroom self contained unit (14 Ordnance Lane) into a 3 bedroom shared unit and convert a 1 bedroom unit (11 Ordnance Lane) into a training facility (primarily for customer use).

Two options were presented to Members:

Option A. To convert unit 14 from one 2 bedroom property into 3 shared units (3 bedrooms, shared kitchen and shared bathroom) and to convert unit 11 into a training facility. This proposal would provide 1 additional unit. Total units at Ordnance Lane would be: 8 bed-sits (shared), 14 self contained bed-sits, 4 self contained 1 bed units, 4 self contained 2 bed units, 1 self contained 3 bed unit, plus existing office space. Unit 14 would primarily be used to accommodate young people in preference to Bed and Breakfast.

Option B. to retain existing units and continue to offer a limited support service.

The proposal to convert unit 14 into 3 shared bed-sits and unit 11 into a training facility would increase the potential weekly income by £34.04 (or £1,770.08 pa assuming 100% occupancy).

Members welcomed the proposal and praised the staff for doing an excellent job.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member for Housing be advised to approve Option A and convert units 11 and 14 into training facilities and shared accommodation units.

Decision of the Executive Member for Housing

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To improve services for hostel residents by providing a communal area for residents meetings and training facilities.

79. Change to Temporary Tenancy and Licence Conditions

Members considered a report which looked at the need to change the following 'tenancy' conditions: travellers licence conditions; non-secure temporary accommodation agreement (shared hostel and non shared hostel); non-secure temporary accommodation agreement (dispersed); and introduction of a under 18's licence for permanent 'tenancies' to incorporate guarantor and support provider.

The report advised that the current temporary accommodation agreements and travellers licences needed updating to streamline and to incorporate conditions previously omitted. There was a need to introduce a requirement for a guarantor for under 18's in both temporary accommodation and permanent housing as by law a person under 18 cannot be issued with a tenancy or hold an interest in land but can be placed on a licence to occupy or can be granted a tenancy status with a guarantor.

Members were presented with two options:

Option A. To adopt the new agreements in line with legal requirements.

Option B. To continue operating using the old agreements, some of which are not legal.

It was queried who would act as guarantor for someone under 18 leaving council care. Officers reported that for under 18s, the council would be the guarantor, and for over 18s there would be a support package from a third party provider.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member for Housing be advised to approve option A to adopt the new terms and conditions and that they take effect from 2nd April 2007.

Decision of the Executive Member for Housing

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To streamline conditions of tenancies and licences wherever possible, to include new conditions which are necessary to the safe and effective management of CYC accommodation.

80. Review of Former Arrears Incentive Scheme

Members considered a report which looked at success and value of the former arrears incentive to accepted homeless households and proposed a continuation and expansion of the scheme.

The pilot former incentive scheme was agreed at Housing EMAP on 6th March 2006 and was introduced on 1/4/06. During 2006/7 16 people signed up to the former arrears incentive scheme, of whom 8 made regular payments of 13+ weeks entitling them to an incentive payment. This amounted to £3666.86 arrears recovered and £1080.25 incentive given. It was acknowledged that this was a slow start but that there was significant value in the continuation of the scheme.

Three options were presented to Members:

Option A. To continue with the incentive scheme for accepted homeless only until offer of permanent accommodation.

Option B. To continue with the incentive scheme for accepted homeless and to extend the incentive scheme to those who 'sign up' and are living in hostels / supported housing projects that are actively engaging in the re-settlement programme until offer of permanent accommodation.

Option C. To cancel the scheme at the end of the pilot.

The pilot scheme resulted in £3666.86 arrears being recovered at a 'cost' of £1080.25 in write offs. If the take up of this scheme increased to 100 customers, each paying £5pw then anticipated recovery would be £26,000 pa and 'write off costs' £13,000. If this prevented only 4 customers either requiring or living in temporary accommodation (B&B) for 1 year this could generate a saving of £58,400 per annum.

Members requested that a progress report be brought back in 12 months time to provide feedback on the uptake of the scheme.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member for Housing be advised to approve Option B, to continue the former arrears scheme and to extend to re-settlement customers.

Decision of the Executive Member for Housing

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To encourage and assist customers to repay any former arrears in order to meet CLG temporary accommodation targets and to prevent blockages in resettlement accommodation.

81. Former Tenants Arrears – Write off

Members considered a report which sought agreement to write off a number of former tenants arrears.

As previously agreed by EMAP, write off reports would be brought to EMAP every 6 months. This would assist officers and members in the

monitoring process and should give a clearer view on performance throughout the year. Details of individual cases were set out in Annex A.

Members were presented with two options:

Option A: Maintain these Former Tenant Arrears (FTAs) on accounts. This would lead to an increase in the bad debt provision and would go against good practice as commented on in the Housing Inspectors report of October 2002.

Option B: Write the debts off on the understanding that if necessary they could be reinstated at a later date.

Members congratulated and thanked the Income Management Team for their efforts in reducing the number of former tenants arrears.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member for Housing be advised to approve option 2 which involves writing off FTAs of £20450.77 as detailed in Annex A.

Decision of the Executive Member for Housing

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: In line with the recommendations of the audit report detailed in paragraph 2 and also for the financial implications listed in the report.

82. Creation of a New Security Grant

Members considered a report which revised the grants and assistance policy to include a new security grant for vulnerable residents, which keeps a dwelling secure, against unauthorised entry and enable the maintenance of defensible space.

The proposed security grant would provide a small grant of up to £1000 to carry out prescribed measures. £40,000 of funding would be set aside from the York Repair Grants to fund this type of work. Full details of the new grant were outlined in Annex 1 but Members noted that the criteria for vulnerable persons followed the principles outlined in the existing York Repair Grant.

Members were presented with two options:

Option 1 To revise the existing policy in line with the proposal

Option 2 Maintain the current policy with no revisions

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member for Housing be advised to approve option 1 to revise the grants and assistance policy to include a new security grant which will help vulnerable residents.

Decision of the Executive Member for Housing

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To help vulnerable customers in fear of crime more quickly.

83. 17 Almsford Road – Petition Update

Member considered a report which provided an update on the council's actions to date concerning the above property following the presentation of a petition to Full Council by Cllr D Horton, and the current course of action being followed.

The property, which was initially in reasonable condition, had been the subject of continuous and serious damage by vandals. On a number of occasions, information had been received that the property had become open to trespass, and where this had happened, the Council had enforced Section 29 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 to ensure that the building made secure.

After a long history of representations by the Council, the owners confirmed on the 2nd March 2007 that they wished to apply for an Empty Homes Grant to bring the bungalow back into use and lease it to York Housing Association for five years, (a requirement of the scheme). Their application was due to be submitted by 17th March 2007. Once approved the applicant would have 12 months in which to claim the grant, however the Council would be working with the owners to ensure that work was carried out as soon as possible.

Officers reported that they had now received a completed application form and this had been signed by the Housing Association. Members queried whether there was enough funds to renovate the property. It was reported that there was sufficient funds to give the grant which would cover 75% of the costs, up to a maximum of £20 000, and the owner would need to find the other 25%.

The Chair announced that she would be standing down at the council elections and thanked all the staff in Housing and Adult Social Services for their hard work over the years.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member for Housing be advised to note the contents of this report and the action taken to date.

Decision of the Executive Member for Housing

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To inform the Executive Member.

CLLR SUE SUNDERLAND
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING

CLLR SUE GALLOWAY
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

CLLR JANET GREENWOOD
Chair of Advisory Panel

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.15 pm.