

Minutes of the meeting of the **SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION) COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Wednesday, 12 July 2017 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor L A Keen

Councillors: T A Bond
P I Carter
G Cowan
B J Glayzer (as substitute for Councillor G Rapley)
P J Hawkins
M J Ovenden
N A G Richards

Officers: Director of Finance, Housing and Community
Head of Strategic Housing
Planning Deliver Manager
Team Leader – Democratic Support
Democratic Support Officer
Director of Finance, Housing and Community
Head of Strategic Housing
Planning Delivery Manager
Team Leader – Democratic Support
Democratic Support Officer

23 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Dixon, R J Frost and G Rapley.

24 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor B J Glayzer was appointed substitute for Councillor G Rapley.

25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

26 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 16 June 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed the Chairman.

27 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Team Leader – Democratic Support advised that no members of the public had registered to speak on items on the agenda to which the public speaking protocol applied.

28 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET RELATING TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION) COMMITTEE

The Committee made no recommendations to Cabinet at its last meeting.

29 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL, CABINET, SCRUTINY (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE) COMMITTEE OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

There were no items of business to consider.

30 ITEMS CALLED-IN FOR SCRUTINY OR PLACED ON THE AGENDA BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, ANY INDIVIDUAL NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OR PUBLIC PETITION

There were no items of business to consider.

31 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Team Leader – Democratic Support presented the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions to the Committee for its consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions be noted.

32 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Team Leader – Democratic Support presented the Scrutiny Work Programme to the Committee for its consideration.

Councillor N A G Richards was asked to provide contact details for Camelot Europe for a suitable date to be arranged for their attendance at a meeting of the Committee to discuss the use of long term empty commercial properties in the district.

As requested by the Committee, the Head of Community Services would attend a meeting of the Committee in November 2017 to discuss the new role and work of the department.

RESOLVED: (a) That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

- (b) That the meeting with East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) be arranged to be held on 1st August 2017 and that the invitation be extended to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- (c) That Stagecoach and KCC be invited to a future meeting to discuss the proposed changes to the bus service within the district.

33 REVISION OF EXISTING HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Director of Finance, Housing and Community presented the Revision of Existing Housing Assistance Policy to the Committee, which had previously been considered at the meeting of the Cabinet on 3 July 2017. The policy was required to assist with delayed hospital discharge (bed-blocking), bring more empty homes into use and to provide more assistance to enable people to live independently at home for longer.

An increase in funding from central Government for Disabled Facilities Grants had been made available to councils and would allow the Council to consider additional types of assistance and included: a Stairlift Grant and the provision of a Hospital Discharge/Admissions Prevention Service through the Handy Person Service. The additional funding would help to ensure that disabled people could live independently for longer and help to reduce bed-blocking due to the safer home environment. This would also help to alleviate hospital admissions. Members were advised that the number of grant applications that could be made were not limited.

Additional funding had also been made available to help meet the demand for the Kent County Council's No Use Empty scheme, providing interest free loans limited up to a maximum of £25k per unit to bring empty properties back into use. The Council would fund up to a maximum of five dwellings per project, providing an additional £15k per unit with each loan being secured by a registered charge on the property. Councillor N A G Richards asked for the criteria to be made available that was used to prioritise the wards of Castle, Maxton & Elms Vale and Tower Hamlets as priority areas for the loans as he believed the Buckland ward should also be included.

The enhanced scheme would be communicated through DDC's communication team as well as various care providers which would include KCC's Occupational Therapists (OTs), Hospital OTs and the Clinical Commissioning Group. Members welcomed and encouraged the policy for the additional funding available.

RESOLVED: That Decision CAB26 be endorsed.

34 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING - FOXBOROUGH LANE, WOODNESBOROUGH

The Director of Finance, Housing and Community introduced the Development of New Affordable Housing – Foxborough Close, Woodnesborough report to the Committee, which had previously been considered at the meeting of the Cabinet on 3 July 2017. The Council had purchased a small area of land from Town & Country

Housing Group (TCHG) in Foxborough Close for a nominal purchase price of £1, on the understanding that the land would be developed to provide affordable housing.

The land obtained adjoined a disused play area owned by the Council and once combined would be suitable for the construction of a pair of two bedroom semi-detached houses. There were concerns from some members that the play area would be removed and were advised that there was a leisure facility which included a new play area at the new village hall.

Members were advised that the Right to Buy scheme would apply and that restrictions would apply under the scheme's legislation which restricted the sale of the properties for no less than the build cost.

RESOLVED: That Decision CAB25 be endorsed.

35 AYLESHAM VILLAGE EXPANSION – RETAIL UNITS, THIRD PARTY LAND AND POST DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENTS

The Planning Delivery Manager presented the Aylesham Village Expansion – Retail Units, Third Party Land and Post Development Improvements report to the Committee, which had previously been considered at the meeting of the Cabinet on 3 July 2017. The report outlined a range of projects at Aylesham to support the ongoing village expansion; these included:

- £130,000 for the fit out of four Council-owned units in Market Place, Aylesham;
- £10,000 for legal and related advice to support the purchase of required third party land within the Aylesham Garden Village Development;
- £25,000 to undertake further works aimed at enhancing and protecting improvements that have been made to the village, but fall outside of the current planning permission;
- £15,000 to support the installation of CCTV in the Market Place and surrounding area.

These projects would be added to the Medium Term Capital Programme and funded from the Aylesham capital receipt.

There had been interest in the retail units from various businesses including a dentist's, balloon shop and barbers to date. DDC's property services would work with the tenants to incorporate appropriate shop fittings and would set rent levels for each unit. Members welcomed the retail offer and the employment opportunities they would create.

New parking spaces had been provided next to the Health Centre and behind the Co-Op. Members were advised there were no plans to change the parking arrangements at the front of the Co-Op. Members were keen for the improvements that needed to be made to the newly landscaped areas around Market Place to be practical but for the residents to be consulted and were advised that there was an ongoing consultation with the parish council to discuss these options.

With regard to infrastructure provision Councillor N A G Richards was concerned that three play areas had been removed to make way for the expansion project and wanted assurance that provisions were in place to cater for the younger generations in the village to help prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The Planning Delivery Manager advised that £10m of infrastructure works had already taken place. A new park had been constructed off Central Boulevard and there were plans for open space at Ratling Road and allotments. It was hoped that the new residents would generate both leisure and commercial demand.

RESOLVED: That Decision CAB29 be endorsed.

36 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor G Cowan, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the remainder of the business on the grounds that the item to be considered involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act.

37 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON LAND AT NEW DOVER ROAD, CAPEL-LE-FERNE

The Head of Strategic Housing introduced the report on the Development of New Affordable Housing on Land at New Dover Road, Capel-le-Ferne.

Members welcomed the benefit that new affordable houses would bring to the district.

RESOLVED: That Decision CAB33 be endorsed.

The meeting ended at 7.23 pm.