
REGENERATION AND HOUSING PANEL

Monday, 14th January, 2019

Present: Councillor , Councillors Stewart Eaves, June Harrison, Joyce Plummer, Dave Parkins and Tim O'Kane

Apologies Clare Cleary, Jean Battle and Tony Dobson

31 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cleary, Battle and Dobson.

32 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest submitted at the meeting.

33 Minutes of Last Meeting held on 19th November 2018

The minutes of the last meeting of the Regeneration and Housing Panel held on 19th November were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing informed the Panel that a further meeting of the Huncoat Forum would take place on the forecoming Wednesday to discuss the proposed Huncoat Garden Village.

Agreed - **That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.**

34 Regeneration and Housing Capital Programme

The Regeneration Manager submitted a report on the progress with the 2018/19 Regeneration and Housing Capital Programme. She reported that spend to date was shown in 3.3 of the report with the Housing Capital Programme for 2018/19 amounting to £4,870,822. She informed the Panel that they were working towards contractual and legal obligations in the programme.

Councillor Plummer enquired about if the spare land at the end of Nuttall Street - the Woodnook Mill site, had been bought by PlaceFirst. The Head of Regeneration and Housing pointed out that a relate item had been placed on the agenda as item 9 for discussion later in the meeting.

Agreed - **That the report be noted.**

35 Housing and Environmental Standards

The Environmental Protection Manager submitted a report to update the Panel on actions taken by the Environmental Protection Team in relation to land and buildings that were detrimental to the amenity of the area and/or causing a public health nuisance, during the 2 month period from 1 November to 31 December 2018.

Members submitted the following comments:

- Request that staff were made aware of Members' appreciation of their efforts in ensuring that environmental standards were maintained.
- The Woonook area at the rear of Nuttall Street requires checking, possibly Edmund Street.
- Councillor Dobson reported that the areas which required improvement would be like a domino effect in respect of the area deteriorating.
- Councillor Harrison reported that bins were not moved in a suitable place at the back which could deal with this.

The Environmental Protection Manager reported that certain powers were available to submit fixed penalty notices for conditions of back gardens. He reported that these were regularly used.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing reported that the issues of bins at the rear should be reported to the Director for Environmental Services.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing referred to concerns of Councillors and residents about the Hargreaves Warehouse and pointed out that the Council had now taken enforcement action.

Agreed - That the report and comments be noted.

36 Disabled Facility Grant Eligibility

The Regeneration Manager submitted a report to update the Panel on the financial and eligibility criteria for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). She pointed out that this report was in response to concerns raised by Members at a previous meeting about the length of time it had taken to process applications for disabled facility grants.

She gave details of the current procedures in place for dealing with applications including:

- Explaining what a Disabled Facility Grant is.
- The types of works covered by Disabled Facility Grants.
- The eligibility of adaptations.
- Financial assessments of grants.

She reported that Social Services would take responsibility for assessing the criteria for eligibility on medical grounds, the Council would consider what was reasonable and practical in the property and the amount of grant approved would be measured by the Government's means testing process.

Members raised the following concerns:

- That people would still be required to contribute even though they may be on the top rate of mobility allowance.
- Requests for grants were often over complicated.
- People in genuine need cannot always acquire the assistance they require through the present system.
- Concerns about how people are required to find contributions and a lack of information in place for guiding people in respect of this.

The Regeneration Manager reported that the assessment of Disabled Facility Grants took into account income and savings and gave details of how calculations were made. She referred Members to the list of adaptations that had been granted across the borough. She reported that Occupational Therapists in hospital could make referrals to Social Services.

and that these adaptations could be completed before the person was sent home from hospital. She referred to the importance of building regulations when assessing and providing adaptations and the Head of Regeneration and Housing pointed out the strict rules around this but suggested that agencies could possibly be more proactive in their approach.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing pointed out that there was no longer a waiting time for funding and requested that Members of the Panel raised awareness of this in communities so that more people could have access to grants for disabled facilities and to refer those in need. He pointed out that there was still a process to go through but ways were being sought to speed the process up.

Agreed - That Members noted the rules on Disabled Facility Grants.

37 Asylum Seekers and Syrian Refugees

The Housing Strategy & Policy Manger submitted a report to update the Regeneration and Housing Panel on the dispersal of asylum seekers in Hyndburn and the Home Office request to increase the number of properties available. The report also updated the Panel about the Lancashire Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme and Hyndburn's participation in this.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing pointed out that there had been two distinct programmes – one around the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme and one around Asylum Seekers. He explained the difference between the two programmes and reported that SERCO currently had the Government contract for ensuring provision of accommodation for asylum seekers in the North West, although this contract was due for retender. He reported that the Syrian Refugee resettlement programme had gone well and those rehoused in Hyndburn had settled in well. He reported that pressure was anticipated from Government to increase the number of asylum seekers rehoused in the borough.

Councillor Plummer advised the Panel that SERCO had not been very helpful in placing people of mixed religion in one accommodation which had, in turn, resulted in the Police being called out. She also complained that there was a lack of communication from SERCO to ward Councillors when people were rehoused in their wards and referred to the importance of ensuring that this happened.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing reported that SERCO had responded when Hyndburn Borough Council had been required to provide housing. He referred Members to table 3.4 of the report showing the latest available information on the number of dwellings secured by SERCO in Lancashire, for asylum seekers.

Councillor Parkins asked if a representative from SERCO could be invited to a meeting of the Panel.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing indicated that there would be difficulties in inviting a representative of SERCO to address the Panel and that concerns may be better addressed by the Member of Parliament. He also advised the Panel against raising public awareness of rehousing asylum seekers and refugees due to possible extremist opinions. Councillor O'Kane suggested that greater efforts could be made to promote a more positive perception of the rehousing of asylum seekers and refugees.

- Agreed**
- (1) That the Panel noted the current situation in respect of the Asylum Dispersal Programme in Hyndburn; and**
 - (2) That the Panel recommend that delegated authority be sought from Cabinet for the Head of Regeneration and Housing to negotiate and agree an extension to the current commitment of 15 properties and to consider extending the current areas for dispersal beyond Accrington and Church.**

38 Lancashire County Council Budget Saving Proposals: Implications for Housing Services

The Head of Regeneration and Housing advised the Panel on potential implications of Lancashire County Council's (LCC) budget saving proposals for housing services in Hyndburn.

He reported that there were two direct implications for housing services in the borough and these were to declare the county owned traveller site, Whinney Hill, Altham surplus including an option to sell and the cessation of Home Improvement Service contracts. He explained that the traveller site had been owned by Lancashire County Council and that Hyndburn Borough Council had managed this on their behalf. He reported that the Council were in the process of writing to Lancashire County Council expressing concern with both proposals and updated the Panel further by stating that since this report had been written there had been concerns about temporary closure. He referred to consultations being held with the Council to look at the main issues.

Agreed - **That the report be noted.**

39 Housing Growth

The Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report to update the Panel on progress with new housing opportunities and development across the Borough. He referred Members to a typo in 3.2 ii) of the report in which he pointed out that this should have read 'Accrington Area Action Plan' and not 'Accrington Area Advice Plan' DPD'.

He informed the Panel that as part of the completed housing needs assessment a report would be submitted to the next meeting of Cabinet to keep Members informed about the document. He reported that they would aim to build 216 new dwellings per annum between the present and 2036. He referred to Huncoat Garden Village proposal and reported on good progress with the HGV Masterplan and Delivery Strategy. He reported that an update report would be submitted to the next meeting of Cabinet on 17th January to inform Members of the outcome of the stage 2 Option development and viability testing. He reported that a 3rd Option would arise from this and that the preferred final Masterplan would be ready by the end of April 2019. He reported that further consultation would be held with residents and the community. He informed Members of details of key housing sites.

Agreed - **That the report be noted.**

40 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

41 The Time and Date of Future Meetings:

The next meeting of the Regeneration and Housing Panel was scheduled for Monday 18th March 2019.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed