

REGENERATION AND HOUSING PANEL

Monday, 10th June, 2019

Present: Councillor Loraine Cox (in the Chair), Councillors Tony Dobson, Stewart Eaves, Mohammad Ayub, Tim O'Kane and June Harrison

Apologies Jean Battle, Joyce Plummer and Parkins

42 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Parkins, Battle and Plummer.

Councillor O'Kane and June Harrison acted as substitute representatives for Councillor Battle and Councillor Parkins, respectively.

43 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest submitted at the meeting.

44 Minutes of Last Meeting held on 14th January 2019

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Regeneration and Housing Panel held on 14th January 2019 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

45 Regeneration and Housing Capital Programme

The Head of Regeneration and Housing and the Regeneration and Property Manager submitted a report on progress with the 2018/19 Regeneration and Housing Capital Programme. The Head of Regeneration and Housing reported that progress was being made to ensure programme delivery and spend in line with project budgets and approvals.

He referred to key projects Phoenix 1D and Pendle Street and updated the Panel on their progress. A brief outline on progress on face-lifting works in Woodnook was also provided. Reference was made to an increase in Government funding for Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) allocations for 2019/20. Hyndburn's allocation for 2019/20 is £965,000. He advised the Panel on how the funding could be utilised beyond mandatory DFGs to help vulnerable people to live independently. He indicated that there would be a further report on the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy item later in the agenda.

The Regeneration and Property Manager advised that slow progress was being made with the shop front works on Blackburn Road that makes up the current stage of the THI Accrington town centre work. She explained that grant applications were progressing slower than the Council would like due to funding and legal issues.

Councillor Dobson pointed out that all works should be completed by September 2019. The Regeneration and Property Manager explained that a meeting had been organised to

discuss the slow take-up of shop front THI grants for shop fronts, at which the Council intend to ask for a 12 month extension to the funding deadline. The Council is hopeful the request will be supported by Heritage Lottery.

Agreed

(1) That the report be noted; and

(2) That the comments on the 2019/20 Regeneration and Housing Capital Programme be noted.

46 Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

The Head of Regeneration and Housing informed the Panel that the Environmental Protection Manager had now left the authority and, as such, there were currently some capacity issues within the team with five posts vacant. He explained what was being done to fill these roles. He also reported that the Council proposes to refresh the Housing Renewal Policy and the Regeneration and Housing Team would be working on this in the forthcoming months. He referred to the key policy areas including:

- Education and Encouragement to provide information and advice to assist any person to improve, repair, adapt or rebuild residential premises.
- Direct Financial Assistance where the Council would provide assistance to vulnerable households including the elderly and disabled including mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and non-mandatory DFGs, Emergency Works Grants, Facelift Grants and Relocation Assistance.
- Indirect Financial Assistance where assistance may be provided by working in partnership to support regeneration and renewal of poor quality housing.
- Enforcement Action which would allow the Council to use various powers to intervene and secure improvements where housing conditions were in disrepair and/or unacceptable.

He reported that the aim was to create a revised Housing Renewal Policy by September 2019.

Members made observations and raised the following issues:

- If DFGs could be used to make adaptations to a communal area where a patient was living in an upstairs flat.
- If there would still be a future for Homewise?
- If a means test would still be applied to requests for DFGs over £7,000.
- A comment that people who had saved all of their life should still expect to receive something back in the form of DFGs.
- How many extensions were provided yearly using DFGs.
- The number of people requesting low value schemes.
- Reference to the definition of facelift grants and the importance of emergency works grants in preventing people falling into the hospital system.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing responded to the above queries. He stressed that DFGs were 'person related' grants and therefore not appropriate for adaptations for communal areas. He advised that there was still a role for Homewise in the future and that means testing would continue for DFGs over the value of £7,000. He outlined details of the criteria for emergency works grants and informed the Panel that facelift grants were targeted neighbourhoods of greater need. He gave details of the criteria for face-lifting properties and that the Policy would include information on enforcement work.

- Agreed**
- (1) That the Panel noted the key policies for a new Housing Renewal Policy; and**
 - (2) That Members' comments on the proposed Policy areas set out in the report are noted by the Head of Regeneration and Housing.**

47 Meeting Housing Needs

The Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report to update the Panel on the progress with reviewing Hyndburn's Homelessness Strategy. He also reported on the review of the B with Us Allocations Policy.

He referred to the work required to review the Council's Homelessness Strategy and the areas it would cover. He reported that there was not a great homelessness problem in Hyndburn because of an oversupply of housing, however, he explained homelessness did occur, usually emergency homelessness, but arrangements were in place to either prevent homelessness happening or to rehouse households with minimum delay.

Councillor Dobson suggested that DFG money could be used for homeless people on the basis of preventing an impact on NHS services.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing advised that homeless revenue funding was already in place to support homeless people and that funding was used to provide support to enable vulnerable people to be able to remain in them. In respect of teenagers who presented as homeless he informed the Panel that there was a legal duty to secure accommodation for them.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing informed the Panel that Hyndburn Borough Council was a member of the sub-regional choice based lettings partnership called B-with-Us which is a common allocations policy across East Lancashire and a review of this policy was currently being undertaken. The implantation of the policy was scheduled for April 2020.

- Agreed**
- (1) That the Panel noted the timetable and progress with reviewing Hyndburn's Homelessness Strategy; and**
 - (2) That the Panel noted the timetable and progress with undertaking the review of the B with Us Allocations Policy.**

48 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 reported on new housing development in the borough in line with the Council's Housing Corporate Strategy. He pointed out that there had been some good progress with key housing sites across the borough and provided examples of this. He also reported that other planning consents had not progressed because of viability issues and unrealistic land owner expectations on values.

Members of the Panel discussed the five year supply of housing and the number of new properties required to meet Government targets.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing referred to the Huncoat Garden Village (HGV) and reported on the appointment of two firms of consultants to progress the HGV Masterplan and Delivery Strategy. He advised that Members noted that once the Masterplan had been

finalised it would be incorporated into Planning Policy. He gave some details of the emerging Masterplan and informed the Panel that there had been delays due to the need for an ecological survey to help understand significant butterfly presence. He reported that there had also been dialogue with Network Rail but this had been slower than expected. He also explained that the consultants were re-visiting the impact on the highway and possible ways of mitigating any increase in road traffic.

Members would be consulted on the preferred option within the next 2 months once issues in respect of ecology, Network Rail and highways were concluded with the aim of the Masterplan and Delivery Strategy being completed in time for Cabinet in September or November 2019.

Councillor Dobson asked if there was an increased risk of empty properties due to the growth plan for Huncoat Village Green site. The Chair asked if there would be affordable housing on the site and if block buying by social housing providers would be permitted.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing acknowledged that there was a risk but this would have to be monitored explaining that people would leave Hyndburn if new modern homes were not built as well as meeting future household growth. He also reported that plans included affordable housing as per planning policy. He indicated that he would keep Members informed.

Agreed - That the report and Members' comments be noted.

49 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

50 The Time and Date of Future Meetings:

The next meeting of the Regeneration and Housing Panel was scheduled for Monday, 5th August 2019.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed