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# REGENERATION AND HOUSING PANEL

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**Tuesday, 14th December, 2021**

**Present:** Councillor Loraine Cox (in the Chair), Councillors June Harrison, Marlene Haworth, Caroline Montague, Joyce Plummer and Dave Parkins

**Apologies** Mohammad Ayub

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## **88 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Ayub. There were no substitutions.

## **89 Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

## **90 Minutes of Last Meeting held on 9th March 2020**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Regeneration and Housing Panel held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

## **91 Huncoat Garden Village**

The Housing Strategy and Policy Manager submitted a report to update Members of the Panel on progress with the Huncoat Garden Village project.

The Head of Housing & Regeneration reported that the masterplan framework and strategy had been approved by Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021. He outlined the key components of the masterplan as set out in the report, which included the promotion of over 1500 new homes and a new relief road linking Huncoat Village with the A56 highlighting that the new road had to be constructed once 400 new homes had been constructed. He also explained that there would be provision to expand Huncoat Junior School (subject to discussions with Lancashire County Council and the school). He pointed out that they were working with Homes England to secure funding to support key infrastructure, such as the relief road, and the Council had been asked to contribute £40k to make a business case for the relief road, with Homes England contributing £115k.

Members of the meeting requested further information on the following issues:

- The effect of new planning applications on the project, particularly for the former Power Station site of 450 houses
- The low number of bungalows planned for
- Concern that the current infrastructure would not be adequate if funding could not be found for a new relief road
- A need to ensure that the current residents of Huncoat did not suffer due to a lack of thought around planning and timescales

- Extending school size would increase road traffic on Lower Gate Road and in the surrounding areas
- The infrastructure of the current school was not adequate to take an increase in demand and a new school would be required
- Consideration should also be given to increasing education capacity for older children

The Head of Regeneration and Planning responded that:

- The masterplan promoted key components including a relief road which would be required for any new housing development once approximately 400 new homes had been constructed. This would be funded by Government assistance or from contributions from Section 106 Agreements.
- The masterplan did not illustrate any specific house types. House types would be addressed and considered as part of planning applications. A minimum number of bungalows could be expected as set out in the local plan.
- Timescales were difficult to predict, in respect of when a new relief road would be triggered, but Planning Officers would work with developers. He indicated that it would be late Summer/Autumn before they knew if Government funding had been provided for a new road and the submission of outline planning applications would make direction clearer.
- Discussions were ongoing in respect of agreeing an extension to the school but it was the aim to discourage use of cars although draft plans for the school had included an extension to car parking to relieve parking on the highway.
- If work on expanding the current Primary school was not successful then the masterplan was sufficiently flexible to allow a new Primary school.
- Lancashire County Council had indicated that there was sufficient school provision for an increase in older children in Hyndburn.

**Agreed**

**- That the report be noted.**

## **92 New Housing Development**

The Head of Regeneration and Housing provided a report to update Members on major residential developments and opportunities across the borough of Hyndburn. He reported on major housing sites across the borough with 738 new homes currently under construction of which 496 were open market sales and 242 were affordable houses. He outlined a number of key housing sites allocated for development in the near future and pointed out that shared ownership properties were very popular.

**Agreed**

**- That the report be noted.**

## **93 Housing Needs and Homelessness**

The Housing Strategy and Policy Manager, Chris Gregory, submitted a report to provide an overview of housing needs and homelessness in the Borough.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing referred to the data set out in the report relating to housing needs and the implementation of the new B with us Allocation Policy. It gave information on housing need, the number of active cases and demand for specific property type. It was anticipated that demand for social housing would rise significantly due to the coronavirus crisis. He also referred the number of Afghan families to be resettled in Hyndburn and a slow social housing turnover impacting the process and timescale.

He reported that most homeless cases were dealt with upon presentation but referred to the complexity of housing supply and suitable vacancies to meet housing needs. He explained that there were challenges to increase affordable housing supply whilst securing access to the private rented sector for some households in housing need. The challenges, as set out in the report, were as follows:

- Securing more private rented sector accommodation
- Working more collaboratively to secure support from agencies, particularly those who can help with mental health and substance misuse.
- Continue to develop the housing and support offer to ensure it meets current and future needs.

Members requested further information or consideration of the following issues:

- Concern that some homeless people were not being rehoused in appropriate settings causing distress to other residents.
- That rates were being paid on empty properties?
- The importance of preventing areas from falling into a downward spiral by enforcing sales of empty properties.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing reported that he would speak to Onward Homes and other relevant organisations with regards to the problems being caused by the rehousing of some vulnerable tenants and their behaviour, as raised at the meeting. He explained that the report had indicated that there was a solution to bring some properties back into private sector use (for those considered as long term empty – over 6 months). He reported that Hyndburn did have a lot of empty properties but the Council had also carried out a lot of hard work to bring empty properties back into use. He referred to the importance of the private sector in meeting housing needs in the borough. He indicated that a report on Enforced Sales of Properties could be brought back to a future meeting of the Regeneration and Housing Panel.

**Agreed**

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That a report on ‘Enforced Sales of Properties’ be brought back to a future meeting.**

## **94 Environmental Protection**

The Head of Regeneration and Housing and the Interim Environmental Protection Manager submitted a report to provide an update and overview on the work and service requests for the Council’s Environmental Protection service.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing referred to the services provide by the Section and gave details of what they did. He pointed out that noise nuisance received the largest number of complaints and this had increased since the Coronavirus outbreak. An additional Officer had been appointed to deal with noise nuisance on a two year contract. Housing complaints accounted for approximately 25% of all complaints with housing disrepair being the biggest single request for service. He referred to the disrepair of the Waterside Apartments and action being taken to remedy this and to environmental crime and liaising with external agencies to deal with complex cases. He informed the Panel that the Service was struggling to recruit professionally qualified and experienced environmental health officers and therefore a number of posts were being covered through staff from employment agencies on a temporary basis, until a staffing review was completed and implemented by early 2022. Despite these challenges the Team were working and performing well.

Members provided the following information:

- Requested an update on a HMO at 184 Avenue Parade (terraced house) in respect of a room size being inadequate.
- A need for there to be clear information about how scrap metal licences could be used and especially to inform people that separate licences were needed in each borough.
- Who was able to report a property in bad condition?
- Concern about the condition of additional properties owned by a landlord of a property already found to be a poor and dangerous condition on Nuttall Street. Officers were asked if they could check the condition of the landlord's other properties.
- Reference was made to a case relating to scrap metal trading with no appropriate licences at the bottom of Bolton Avenue, Huncoat. External agencies had been involved by there had been no action. An update was requested.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing and the Interim Environmental Protection Manager responded to the issues listed above as follows:

- Advice was provided that room size in properties also relied on use of room before being determined as adequate. The Interim Environmental Protection Manager indicated that he would check this property and report back.
- There were two types of scrap metal licences (site and mobile) and anyone could report the poor condition of a property.
- Follow up work was taking place on the Nuttall Street property and if concerns were found in respect of other housing stock, inspections would be organised.
- The issue in respect of trading at the bottom of Bolton Avenue would be investigated and the Member would be updated with any relevant information.

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

**95 Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

**96 The Time and Date of Future Meetings:**

**Agreed** - That the Regeneration and Housing Panel meet on the following dates:

- Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022**
- Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022**
- Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022**
- Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

Signed:.....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
At which the minutes were confirmed

