
REGENERATION AND HOUSING PANEL

Monday, 17th September, 2018

Present: Councillor Clare Cleary (in the Chair), Councillors Jean Battle, Tony Dobson, Stewart Eaves, June Harrison and Joyce Plummer

Apologies Dave Parkins

11 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

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

12 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were submitted at the meeting.

13 Minutes of Last Meeting held on 17th July 2018

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Regeneration and Housing Panel held on 17th July 2018 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing provided updates on the following items:

Item 3 – CCTV Cameras and Hargreaves Warehouse, Church. He reported that all CCTV cameras had been repaired and were now fully operational. He informed Members that Hargreaves Warehouse was an item that would be discussed later in the meeting.

Item 5 – Members were referred to a flow chart and documents circulated at the meeting showing the process for landlords applying for the selective licensing.

Item 8 – The Head of Regeneration and Housing agreed to meet with Councillor Dobson separately to respond to his proposal that the Council use byelaws to deal with long term empty commercial premises.

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

14 Housing Renewal Funding

The Regeneration Manager submitted a report on the progress with the 2018/19 Housing Renewal Programme.

She reported that there was a capital programme of £1.9 million and gave details of a breakdown of funding for areas of Accrington. She reported on spend to the end of August (with some of the funding being tied up in compulsory purchase orders). Members were referred to appendix one for a further breakdown of each project.

Members requested information on the following issues:

- The amount of time it would take to facelift Hudson Street.
- To confirm if residents on Hudson Street would be required to re-complete application forms for facelift after such a long delay.
- A progress report on improvements to the land in West Accrington (off Newark Street).
- To clarify if Government funding was still available to resolve problems of gap funding to complete projects?

The Head of Regeneration and Housing reported that progress on Hudson Street had been slow due to shortages in technical staff but indicated that the scheme would be delivered once the appropriate staff had been put in place. He reported that there had been no movement in respect of land at Newark Street as this was subject to an agreement with Keepmoat and the project requiring £800,000 gap funding together with uncertainty around a successful compulsory purchase order. He pointed out that other options were being explored. He reported that Government funding was still available but only if you could demonstrate economic gain and this could not be demonstrated.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

15 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 during the 2 month period from 1st July to 31 August 2018. He reported that the amenity of 41 sites had been restored through interventions and there had been 8 prosecutions.

Members submitted the following questions:

- How much money did the interventions generate for the Council?
- That the media was used to promote cases subject to Council intervention to have maximum impact upon the public and prevent future cases.
- What action was being taken against Landlord who dumped rubbish from their properties after tenants vacated the buildings.
- Who should clinical/hazardous waste be reported to as St. John's had a serious problem with used needles being discarded.
- A report that there had been a number of people metal collecting without licences.

The Environmental Protection Manager clarified that fines were imposed and received by the Courts with the Council recovering its costs through the Court Order.

The Chair referred to the problems with publicly releasing details of individual cases but confirmed the Council normally issued a press release following successful prosecutions. She indicated that although the message that dumping rubbish would not be tolerated by the Council, it was equally as important to ensure that there was good interaction between Councillors and residents. She also pointed out that it would be difficult to prove that it was landlords dumping the rubbish of former tenants but where reports were made the Environmental Protection Team always made investigations.

The Environmental Protection Manager indicated that he would investigate the problems of used needles being discarded in the St. John's area and would report the situation to the appropriate authority. He also reported that he would investigate the collection of metal waste without licence.

Resolved (1) That the report be noted; and

(2) That the Environmental Protection Manager would investigate the problems of used needles being discarded in the St. John's area and of metal waste being collected without licence.

16 The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals)(England) Regulations 2018

The Environmental Protection Manager submitted a report to brief Members on the forthcoming changes to the way in which animal boarding establishments, dog breeding establishments, pet shops and riding establishments are to be licensed by the Council and the commencement of responsibility for the licensing of the keeping of animals for exhibitions. He explained that this would come into force from 1st October 2018. He also pointed out that the licence would deal with problems of animals being sold online.

Members expressed concerns about puppy farms and the breeding of dogs and, although agreed with the new legislation, questioned the Council's ability to provide the man-power to enforce it.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

17 Town Centre Update

The Business and Marketing Co-ordinator submitted a report to provide the Panel with an update on the town centre. She referred Members to the information provided showing details of a 'Town Centre Audit' and 2 related maps. She referred to the current vacant properties in the town centre and that the maps provided a clearer variance of the areas struggling or prospering. She reported that the data had been broken down by business sector and that retail on food was prominent compared with an audit carried out in 2015. She also pointed out that the vacancy rate had risen by a further 2%. She reported that this data would be updated quarterly.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing reported that the next stage would be to understand and monitor trends and then to determine ownership of the vacant buildings and open up communications with the owners.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

18 Hargreaves Warehouse

The Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report to provide the Panel with an update on the Church Canal Gateway Project. He reported on the restrictions preventing progress on the building and site and referred to the problems relating to the proximity of the site to Blythes and the planning controls in place known as PADHI Zone (Planning Advice for Developments around Hazardous Installations). In addition the condition of the building was a continued problem and the cost of bringing the building back into use would exceed its value. He reported that Planning and Building Control would be re-checking its condition and that any previous work carried out on the building had been for safety reasons.

Members asked if the owners of the building could be contacted and required, by the Council, to take action. Members also suggested that English Heritage were invited to inspect the building again.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing explained that English Heritage had last inspected the building only 12 months earlier but indicated that he would invite them to carry out a further inspection. However, he warned that this was unlikely due to no changes in circumstances.

A Member referred to the poor and dangerous condition of Hargreaves Warehouse and requested that an inspection was carried out by Building Control. Members also pointed out that the pedestrians were at risk because they were being forced to use the footpaths next to the buildings because the footpaths on the opposite side of the road were being obstructed by a local garage. The Head of Regeneration and Housing indicated he would advise Building Control accordingly.

A Member proposed that the Council used available powers to force owners to carry out necessary works on the buildings. It was proposed that this issue was raised at Full Council by submitting a motion. The Chair agreed to discuss the suggestion further with the Councillor.

- Resolved**
- (1) That the report be noted;**
 - (2) That the Head of Regeneration and Housing invites English Heritage to carry out a further inspection on Hargreaves Warehouse; and**
 - (3) To investigate the obstruction of the footpath adjacent to the properties next to the Church Canal Gateway area.**

19 Housing Growth

The Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report on housing growth setting out key sites in the borough for housing development. He referred to regular updates at Panel meetings showing progress made and informed Members that the masterplan for Huncoat was also making significant progress. He informed Members that the next stage would be to consult residents more widely on those options.

A Member of the Panel referred to land on Ribblesdale Avenue being contaminated preventing housing development and asked for further information.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing reported that this was allocated land in the Local Plan and pointed out that the Council was only the planning authority and not the land owner (who was Lancashire County Council). He also indicated that any contamination would be dealt with and removed and that a site investigation would determine if the land could be used for development. He informed the Panel that further information would be provided at the next meeting.

- Resolved**
- (1) That the report be noted; and**
 - (2) That further information would be provided on the land on Ribblesdale Avenue in respect of housing development.**

20 Urgent Business

Councillor Eaves referred to the expense of the cost of the benches recently installed in Accrington Town Centre.

The Chair reported that the cost of a statute would have been greater and that the benches had been specially commissioned by an artist who had been required to provide benches as a form of artwork and not just functional.

21 The Time and Date of Future Meetings:

Monday 19th November 2018 at 10 am in the Queen Elizabeth room.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed