
Housing and Health Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 1 August 2024 from 7.00 pm - 8.03 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Derek Carnell (Substitute for Councillor Chris Palmer), Ann Cavanagh, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison (Chair), Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Ben J Martin (Substitute for Councillor Hannah Perkin), Tom Nundy, Angie Valls, Karen Watson (Vice-Chair), Tony Winckless (Substitute for Councillor Kieran Golding) and Ashley Wise (Substitute for Councillor Hayden Brawn).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Philippa Davies and Charlotte Hudson.

OFFICER PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Larissa Reed.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Hayden Brawn, Kieran Golding, Pete Neal, Chris Palmer, Richard Palmer and Hannah Perkin.

147 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

148 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 5 March 2024 (Minute Nos. 727 – 734) and 15 May 2024 (Minute Nos. 25 – 26) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

The Head of Housing and Communities gave brief updates on the following items that were considered at the meeting held on 5 March 2024:

Health and Wellbeing Plan Closedown

Progress had been made on the Community Development Strategy and this would also be considered by the Community and Leisure Committee.

Safeguarding Policy Review

The Standards Committee had agreed that all Members undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, and this would go to Full Council for agreement.

Housing Emergency

An affordable housing emergency was declared at the Full Council meeting held on 3 April 2024.

The Chair announced that Glyn Pritchard, Private Sector Housing Manager had recently retired from the Council, and she thanked him for all his work over the years and wished him well.

149 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Ben J Martin declared a non-pecuniary on all the items on the agenda as he

was employed by a housing association and a pecuniary interest in respect of the Urgent Item – Appointment of Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee and he did not vote on this item.

150 **Controlling Spend on Temporary Accommodation - Virement request**

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report as set out in the agenda papers. She highlighted that at its peak, there were 420 households in temporary accommodation (TA), and she outlined the measures taken by the Housing Options team to reduce this figure. The changes implemented in 2023/24 saw various results and these were set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report. The Head of Housing and Communities highlighted the decrease in households in TA at the end of 2023/24 as being 304, and she gave an update at the meeting to say that this figure had further reduced to 277 households.

Members were invited to speak, and they made comments which included:

- Thanked the Head of Housing and Communities and her team for the report and the work carried out so far;
- this was a great example of invest to save;
- welcomed the reduction of households in TA;
- sought clarification on how the proposed re-structure would decrease the TA figures;
- the housing team was doing a good job, and supported funding to further improve the situation;
- sought latest figures on homelessness and ‘sofa-surfing’;
- clarification sought on whether the changes would be permanent or temporary, to ensure that the proposals worked;
- the report appeared to come across as ‘management heavy’;
- considered the proposed approach to be a sensible way forward;
- this was a lot of money to transfer;
- the restructure consultation needed to be completed, prior to any changes taking place;
- suggested update reports came to the Housing and Health Committee more frequently than 6-monthly, as set out in paragraph 2.9 of the report;
- clarification sought on when the staff consultation would end; and
- suggested that many of the points raised at this meeting be incorporated into the report which would be considered by the Policy & Resources Committee.

In response to points raised by the committee, the Head of Housing and Communities confirmed the following:

- To help determine how a restructure would make a difference, work had taken place on the analysis of TA accommodation, such as time spent in TA; triage was enhanced; there was feedback from staff via the consultation; also working with partners; managing the Council’s own TA; and investment in the Council’s landlord team would all help bring costs down;
- homeless figures would be circulated to the Committee;
- the changes would be permanent, and so-far over a 12-month trial period, the new processes had been successful;
- the intention was not for the process to be management heavy, there would be

managers in place, but a lot of the work would be operational, with frontline staff; and

- the staff consultation would end on 27 August 2024.

The Chair moved the following motion: That update reports be presented to the Housing and Health Committee each quarter, rather than 6-monthly. This was seconded by the Vice-Chair and on being put to the vote was agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That it be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee that a virement of £421k from the Temporary Accommodation Budget to Housing Salary Budget be approved.

(2) That update reports be presented to the Housing and Health Committee each quarter, rather than 6-monthly.

151 Annual Report - Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report as set out in the agenda papers.

Resolved:

(1) That progress on the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 27 be noted.

152 Forward Decisions Plan

The Head of Housing and Communities explained that following the meeting on 5 March 2024, she had made contact with various external agencies with a view to inviting them to future Housing and Health Committee meetings. These included Kent County Council Adult Social Care; Medway & Swale Health Care Partnership; and Southern Housing. The Head of Housing asked for Members' views on whether one or two external agencies be invited to a future meeting and what order they would like them to attend.

There was some discussion and Members said that there should only be one topic considered at each meeting and they agreed the following:

- Kent County Council Adult Social Care – 22 October 2024
- Medway & Swale Health Care Partnership – 14 January 2025
- Southern Housing – 4 March 2025

Resolved:

(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan and the topics for consideration above, be noted.

153 Urgent Item - Appointment of Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee

Resolved:

(1) That Councillors Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison, Peter

Marchington, Peter MacDonald, Hannah Perkin and Karen Watson sat on the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee.

(2) That Councillor Angela Harrison be Chair and Councillor Karen Watson be Vice-Chair of the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel