

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Councillor Monica Press (Chair)
Councillor Matthew Palmer (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Judith Blakeman
Councillor Janet Evans
Councillor Ian Henderson
Councillor Charles O'Connor
Councillor Josh Rendall
Councillor Dori Schmetterling

Others in Attendance

Councillor Kim Taylor-Smith (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Grenfell and Housing)
Councillor Mary Weale (Lead Member for Finance and Modernisation)
Richard Egan (Director of Corporate Property)
Taryn Eves (Director of Financial Management)
Doug Goldring (Director of Housing Management)
Mark Grant (Head of Investment and Development, Corporate Property)
Robyn Fairman (Executive Director for Grenfell Response)
Steve Mellor (Housing Group Finance Manager)
Martin Mortimer (Development Manager, Corporate Property)
Luke Newman (Strategy Officer)
Joe Philip (Implementation Manager, Grenfell Team)
Rachel Sharp (Director of Housing Needs and Supply)
Asha Bagayat (Governance Services)
Francesca Boylan (Governance Services)

The meeting was attended by some five members of the public and press.

A1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

A2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. Monica Press declared an interest as a leaseholder in a Council-owned property.

A3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 DECEMBER 2019

Subject to correcting Item A9, Paragraph 2 to read “Cllr Blakeman expressed disappointment that the Barlby contract had been won by Mace as the design and build contractor, given their precious record at Moore West,” the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

The Committee asked for an update on ‘The Homelessness Reduction Act 2018’ at a future meeting.

A4. REVENUE BUDGETS 2019/20

Taryn Eves and Steve Mellor introduced the item explaining that the report has not significantly changed since the version presented to the Committee in December. They went on to highlight the budget pressures, savings proposals and provision of 2% inflation in the fees and charges for Property Services. There were no fees and charges in relation to Housing Services.

The Committee was then invited to ask questions or seek clarification. The following main points were noted:

- Taryn Eves said she was not aware of a Council-wide policy to renegotiate contracts for the provision for future inflation, however services do undertake annual contract reviews and will have conversations to keep costs down.
- The growth in the temporary accommodation budget of £2.2m was in relation to an increase in the number of households supported and the cost of renting in the private sector.
- The Private Rented Sector Team growth item was to provide continuation funding for a team providing support to residents to find tenancies in the private sector.
- The Car Parking Account could cover the relocation of the shared services car pound. Subject to it meeting the legal conditions, S106 money and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was a source of funding the capital programme, but there was scope to improve the use of it.
- Holland House Structural Works – These related to urgent health and safety works and preserving the historical fabric of the listed building. The Committee also noted that English Heritage had put Holland House on its list of buildings at risk.

RESOLVED:-

The Committee noted the Revenue Budget 2019-20 and agreed to refer the following comments to the Leadership Team meeting on 20 February 2019:

1. It recommended the adoption of a Council-wide policy to renegotiate contracts for the provision for future inflation, to keep costs down;
2. It recommended the improved use of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies for funding the capital programme; and
3. It sought reassurance that following the essential structure works of £1.6m, Holland House would require no further capital expenditure from

the Council and suggested that external funding opportunities be explored for future requirements i.e. crowdfunding and grants.

Action by: Executive Director for Resources and Assets

A5. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2019/20

Steve Mellor introduced the report and explained that following discussion at the January Tenants Consultative Committee meeting, an adjustment has been made to fund the contribution to the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) from the Council's General Fund rather than the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Committee was then invited to ask questions or seek clarification. The following main points were noted:

- The budget for Resident Engagement in 2018/19 mainly related to work being undertaken to look at possible future management options for the Council's housing stock. This provision was not needed in 2019/20.
- There was a discussion on Universal Credit. Unless vulnerable, a tenant would need to be in arrears for eight weeks before they could qualify for an alternative payment arrangement.
- From the public gallery, a social housing tenant expressed disquiet that as a result of the leaseholder insurance charge reducing, the HRA was having to absorb the difference. In response, Doug Goldring clarified that that was certainly the case last year, but the contract has been renegotiated and the premium has come down.

RESOLVED:-

The Committee:

- 1) Noted the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget 2019-20;
- 2) Requested a breakdown of the external loans which were funding the HRA outstanding debt; and
- 3) Agreed to refer the following comments to the Leadership Team meeting on 20 February 2019:
 - i. It welcomed the proposal to fund the contribution to the KCTMO from the Council's General Fund rather than the HRA.
 - ii. It recommended that the impact of Universal Credit on rent arrears be monitored.

Action by: Executive Director for Resources and Assets

A6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN

Steve Mellor introduced the report and provided a detailed explanation on the spending requirements and potential sources of funding.

The Committee was then invited to ask questions and seek clarification. The following main points were noted:

- Cllr. Palmer expressed concern about the £80m debt which needed servicing and said that any slippage in the investment plan would result in additional costs.
- There was a discussion on the Asset Management Strategy. Cllr. Taylor-Smith stated that the value of the backlog of investment required to bring existing Council stock up to an appropriate standard was based on financial performance. Doug Goldring said that we needed to review the health and safety of the stock and improve it and that the Asset Management Strategy would be provided based upon the Stock Conditions Survey within the next six months.
- In response to a question from the public gallery by Samia Badani, Notting Dale ward resident and co-chair of the Notting Dale Residents Advisory Board, on whether Bramley House was included in Lancaster West, Doug Goldring confirmed it was, and that provision for it had been made in the Stock Conditions Survey.
- There was a detailed discussion on the boundary of the transfer of freehold ownership of the Grenfell Tower site to the Government and clarification was given on why a long-term lease option was not feasible.
- A property would only be lost from the portfolio under Right to Buy and not through statutory 90-year lease extensions.
- Sale of Vacant Properties – In response to concerns raised by the committee, it was noted that these would have been sold on the open market and would have been high value properties which required significant works to keep them habitable.
- Risks – In response to a question on building the risk of Brexit into the budget, Steve Mellor said that the plan assumes interest rates will be in the region of 4%.

RESOLVED:-

The Committee:

- 1) Noted the draft Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for referral to the Leadership Team meeting on 20 February 2019; and
- 2) Requested the details of the sale of three vacant properties to be circulated to it.

Action by: Executive Director for Resources and Assets

A7. UPDATE REPORT BY THE LEAD MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND MODERNISATION

The Committee received and noted a report providing an update on six particular projects within the Property portfolio.

Canalside House – The Council was still waiting to hear on its grant application to the Tudor Trust to fund the installation of an external lift. The Committee said the lift was a key issue for the voluntary sector tenants.

Barlby New School – The Committee was unhappy with the way the consultant had handled the initial report as regards the right-to-light issue but decided not to push on seeking a second opinion owing to the cost involved. In response to a comment on information disclosure at the time the decision was taken, Mr. Grant said that the Leadership Team had taken the decision based on the worst case scenario of risk of compensation in the event of loss of light. The Committee noted that the issue was now in the public realm which it should be.

The Committee would be receiving an update on the Property Occupation Terms report at its next meeting.

RESOLVED:-

The Committee:

1. Noted the report; and
2. Requested that an update on the lifts be provided to the Canalside House user group.

Action by: Director of Corporate Property

A8. UPDATE REPORT BY THE LEAD MEMBER FOR GRENFELL AND HOUSING

The Committee received and noted the report.

Mr. Goldring said Bramley House was linked to Lancaster West Estate in terms of its management, but in terms of provision to improve the stock, a discussion needed to take place with the residents to agree if it is to remain with Silchester Estate.

The Committee noted that works to re-run the gas pipes at Warwick Road was separate to the refurbishment works and carried an additional cost.

There was a discussion on resident engagement at Silchester and Warwick Road.

In response to questions on preventing lift breakdowns and monitoring extra usage, Mr. Goldring said this was part of the twice yearly service checks. Lifts should be sufficiently robust to transport furniture and this will be in a future brief.

In terms of resident communications, Mr. Goldring said all leaseholders will be issued with a booklet highlighting leaseholder standards and setting out the Council's considerable capital investment in its housing stock. The intention was not to write to everyone at this stage, but to communicate with residents in the first programmes and bring those consultations forward.

The Committee noted that the fire door replacement contract was out to tender.

In terms of the progress in dealing with anti-social behaviour, Cllr. Palmer commented that minor issues could often better be handled and resolved by the residents themselves and suggested setting up a task and finish group to look at developing a policy on this.

There was a suggestion from the public gallery on looking at tenancy agreements with a view to bringing them in line. Mr. Goldring agreed to look at this in the next round of task and finish groups.

RESOLVED:-

The Committee:

1. Noted the report;
2. Endorsed the approach for discussions to take place with residents of Bramley House, to decide if they are to be included with Silchester Estate for improvements;
3. Requested officers to provide regular updates to the residents at Warwick Road;
4. Requested an update on the fire door replacement tender, including the plan for delivery at its next meeting;
5. Suggested setting up a task and finish group to look at developing a policy on residents dealing with minor ASB issues themselves;
6. Requested for copies of the new 'Repairs Handbooks' and the 'Residents' Charter' to be circulated to it; and
7. Endorsed the suggestion of reviewing tenancy agreements in the next round of task and finish groups.

Action by: Director of Housing Management

A9. UPDATE ON PROPOSALS FOR THE DELIVERY OF NEW HOMES

The Committee received and noted the report. Cllr. Taylor-Smith introduced the new Director of Housing Needs, Ms Rachel Sharpe, whom the Committee welcomed.

The Committee reiterated its earlier request to see more financial models other than the 50% social and 50% market rent split. Cllr. Taylor-Smith said the key worker rate was still being formulated but agreed to share it with the Committee once the work was completed.

The 'New Homes Delivery Team' consisted of officers in Planning, Finance, Community Engagement, Property and Housing Management. A new email address has also been set up newhomesinquiries@rbkc.gov.uk

There was a detailed discussion on the consultation strategy.

The Committee noted that need and supply would be looked at to get the best mix of properties.

RESOLVED:-

The Committee:

1. Noted the report;
2. Requested to see other financial models;

3. Suggested setting a time to hold group discussion at the initial events and having a stall at Sainsbury's and other places where local people go to promote the events; and
4. Asked that details of the drop-in consultation sessions be circulated to its Members.

Action by: Director of Housing Needs and Supply

A10. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Committee received and noted the report.

RESOLVED:-

The Committee:

1. Gave consideration to setting up a scrutiny working group on the placement of residents in temporary accommodation and hostels outside of the Borough; and
2. Agreed to increase the diamond rating of a number of Key Decisions on the Forward Plan.

Action by: Director of Governance and Co-ordination

A11. ANY OTHER ORAL OR WRITTEN ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were none.

A12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no matters requiring the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.06pm

Chair