

Review Committee – 9 June 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **9 June 2015** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J H Gibson
Vice-Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr C I Black	Cllr G J Ioannou
Cllr J C Burton	Cllr J L Lawmon
Cllr J D Griffin	Cllr Mrs C Pavelin
Cllr B T Hazlewood	Cllr Mrs M H Spencer
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr M Webb

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley – Portfolio Holder for Community
Cllr M J Steptoe – Portfolio Holder for Enterprise
Cllr M Maddocks

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs L A Butcher, R R Dray and J R F Mason.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton	-	Director
J Bridge	-	Assistant Director, Community and Housing
L Spicer	-	Senior Communications Officer
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

111 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

112 COMMERCIAL USE OF CAR PARKS CHARGING POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Legal Services on the call-in of an Executive Decision.

Cllr M Hoy outlined the reasons for the call in:-

- concern that charging the NHS for parking breast screening units in the Council's car parks is inappropriate as the NHS is providing a health

service for Rochford District residents.

- need for clarification of how the fee charged to the NHS is calculated as this was unclear in the report.

In response to questions, the Committee was advised of the following:-

- The total increase from 2014/15 in the charge to the NHS for siting the breast screening units in the District's car parks will be £4.16 including VAT.
- Although the charging policy relates to commercial use of car parks and health screening is not a commercial activity, neither is the NHS a charitable organisation; it is therefore not entitled to apply for exemption from the charges.
- The Council has a duty to its residents to achieve as good a return as possible on its assets: car parking charges are used towards the upkeep of the District's car parks.
- The total revenue income from the charges levied for the breast screening unit for 2014/15 was £2,133.34 including VAT. A slight increase in the use of the car parks on the days when the unit is parked there is seen; however, this may not necessarily be due to people parking to use the unit.
- Charging the NHS for parking their breast screening units does not pose a serious reputational risk to the Council.
- The NHS has not raised an objection to paying for use of the car parks in the 20 years the system has been in place.
- Although other locations within the District could be considered for siting the units, the current locations have been established with the NHS over time and, it is understood, meet the needs of the NHS.

Members felt that the Council could lead the way by offering non-charging days to the NHS for its health screening units. Alternatively, a set number of spaces in each car park could be made available during the year free of charge for siting of health screening units. During discussion, it was suggested that non-charging days could apply also to emergency services, such as Police and Fire Services on a case by case basis.

A different charging regime is applied to the Approach Car Park, Rayleigh.

On a show of hands, it was:-

Recommended to the Portfolio Holder for Enterprise

That, following information received at the meeting, the decision to charge the NHS for parking breast screening units in the Council's car parks be reconsidered, to take into account the following:-

- The Committee's views on charging the NHS for parking breast screening units in the Council's car parks.
- A need for clarification on the basis for charging in the Council's car parks and how the figures in the report have been calculated.
- As the decision relates to commercial charging, whether the NHS can be considered in the same way as a charity, and thus be eligible to apply for exemption from the charges.

113 HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Legal Services on the call-in of an Executive Decision.

It was noted that although the current housing allocation scheme has operated successfully since its introduction, it is important that the scheme is reviewed regularly. It was anticipated that the proposals would simplify and clarify arrangements.

It was suggested that the Council may become vulnerable if it does not adopt similar qualifying criteria to that of other Essex Authorities, due to the possibility of an increase in applications from outside the District. The aim is to try to ensure that people who are local have the opportunity to get accommodation in the District.

Members were concerned that by increasing the period for establishing residence in the District the Council is imposing a stricter criterion than the District's Housing Associations, which have no such restriction.

Clarification on the following was requested:-

- Detailed figures relating to a potential increase in costs for emergency accommodation as a result of the changes to the period required for establishing residency in the District. Members were reassured that this increase would have very little impact on the most vulnerable people.
- Whether the requirement of a minimum of 16 hours paid employment per week for the past 12 months is calculated on an average basis over the period and how applicants who have 'zero hours' contracts are affected.

On a show of hands, it was:-

Recommended to the Portfolio Holder for Community that the decision to agree the amendments proposed to the Council's Allocation Scheme for Social Housing (as set out in the Director's report) be reconsidered, taking note of the Committee's views and requests for clarification in a reissued report as detailed above.

114 OVERALL WORK PROGRAMME AND METHODOLOGY

The Committee deliberated on a number of topics to be considered for its 2015/16 programme. Some of these topics had been included in the Review Committee's 2014/15 Annual Report as possible topics for consideration by this year's Committee.

It was agreed that the following reviews would be undertaken by the Committee:-

- Treasury Management reports: the Committee agreed to delegate authority to a task and finish group (Cllrs J C Burton, R R Dray, J H Gibson and G J Ioannou) to undertake the review of the three Treasury Management reports. Meeting dates would be 14 July 2015, 24 November 2015 and 26 January 2016.
- Community Safety Partnership (CSP): two reviews will be undertaken in 2015/16, the first of which would be at the meeting on 7 July 2015.
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA): changes to the Council's policy following the recent inspection need to be approved by the Review Committee. The review will be undertaken in the October meeting.
- Health and Social Care, including the overall structure of the Health Service in the county and the implications for Rochford residents
- Michelins Farm: the impact of the recent fire and the Council/ other agencies' activities prior to the recent fire.
- Planning reviews (Planning enforcement/RDC Planning Protocol/Building Control): it was noted that the Assistant Director, Planning post was currently being recruited. The review would be undertaken at this time.
- Budget process and consultation: the first Member Budget awayday is scheduled for 3 October 2015. Members would be able to ask questions of officers at the Member training session on the Budget Process on 24 June. The Committee can then decide whether there should be a formal review of the budget process at the next meeting of the Committee.

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- Council’s Housing Strategy/Homelessness: these services are currently under review to identify best practice. The Committee can review these services once the process is complete.
- Complaints Process at the Council: this review would be undertaken at the meeting on 7 July 2015.

There was discussion around further education provision in the District and, while it is a County function, Braintree District Council has done some work on young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) in their area; a copy of this report will be forwarded to Members.

115 KEY DECISION DOCUMENT

The Committee reviewed the Key Decision Document and noted its contents.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

Chairman

Date

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