

MINUTES

JOINT BUDGET

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TUESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2016

Present:

Members: Banks
Bassadone
Conway
England
Hearn
Imarni (Vice-Chair)
Mahmood (Chairman)
W Wyatt-Lowe

Councillor Griffiths (Portfolio Holder for Housing) and Councillor Harden (Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services)

Officers:

Julie Still	Group Manager – Resident Services
Julie Hedger	Housing Development Group Manager
James Deane	Corporate Director (Finance & Operations)
Fiona Williamson	Group Manager (Property & Place)
Keshika Naidoo	Accountant Housing & Regeneration
Andy Vincent	Group Manager (Tenants & Leaseholders)
Elliott Brooks	Assistant Director - Housing
Julia Hedger	Group Manager Strategic Housing
Andrew Williams	Leader of the Council
Kayley Johnston	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

79 **MINUTES**

There were no minutes to be agreed.

80 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Cllr Timmis.

81 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There was no declaration of interest.

82 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

83 **CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE
COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN**

None.

84 **JOINT BUDGET REPORT 2017/18**

James Deane gave an in depth presentation on the 2017-2018 budget.

There were no questions asked by Members.

Action: None

Outcome: The report was noted.

RESIDENT SERVICES PRESENTATION

Julie Still gave a presentation on Resident Services which also included cost savings.

Cllr Imarni asked what the difference was in the second option reduced saving. What sort of a difference are we looking at.

J Still said it's hard to say as you can't say for certain due to sickness cover. Approximately half of the £27,000 expected savings

Cllr England asked what schools were included.

J Still confirmed that it was Belswaines Primary School and this generates a very small income.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe asked how many schools had shown an interest.

J Still said that schools are normally in a 3 year contract. We are now on the Herts procurement site and can now bid for contracts as and when they arise.

Cllr Imarni stated that a lot of external agencies/companies rely on your CCTV, with a reduction in cover, are people willing to pay more for it.

J Still said it could, affect the service but that any gaps in monitoring would be kept to a minimum. If there is no one on site the cameras are rolling, they can't be proactively involved in monitoring incidents. The hours where we are suggesting that

no monitoring happens would be the quieter times. However this can't be guaranteed anything could happen at any times which is why there is 24/7 cover at the moment.

Cllr England asked if there was any information to back up that quiet times are when theft occurs.

J Still confirmed that all they can use is the evidence which they already have. The new CCTV system can tell us when we are accessing and monitoring incidents and when they accrue.

Cllr Mahmood said that there had been a reported rise in crime recently, it's worth bearing in mind that the CCTV only operates public spaces not residential areas where most burglaries, vehicle crime occur.

J Still stated that there are 202 cameras in public spaces and DBC buildings and a number of sheltered housing schemes too.

Cllr Mahmood said that we won't be publicising any proposed reduction in CCTV.

J Still said definitely not, her biggest concern is the potential loss of the radio systems from the Police as this is 24/7 and helps the partnership working, that I can't say what would happen but this is a risk.

Cllr England asked what point is this due to start changing.

J Still said the proposal is for the next financial year so April 2017.

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES OSC PRESENTATION

E Brooks presented this presentation giving a breakdown of his areas and giving Members an opportunity to ask questions.

Cllr Mahmood asked if the garages under flats were the same sizes as the flats.

E Brooks confirmed that they are not the same size, they are smaller.

Cllr Mahmood asked if the garages can be made to residential places by some structural changes and adoption.

E Brooks said that they had looked at other options but nothing has been decided.

Cllr England asked how many are used for storage rather than garage purposes.

E Brooks said that it's hard to tell really but the majority are used for storage due to the small size.

Cllr Griffith said that many are not damp proof, anything that is put in there gets frost bitten and when it rains it can get wet. The proposed 50k additional investment is required

Cllr Mahmood added saying that we need a balanced perspective it's about keeping residents happy not just about income.

Cllr Bassadone said that she went round the Forum yesterday and saw the Citizen's Advice Bureau's new location; she hopes this will help, as people normally go to the Council then to the CAB, with them being in the same building this should help.

E Brooks said that it will help joint working better but it won't stop people needing specific housing advice.

Cllr England asked if it will cause a risk having CAB in the same building as it may cause an increase.

E Brooks said possibly, they can't really say at the moment, but the more advice people have in the building the better, we think it's a good move but we will have to keep an eye on this.

Cllr Mahmood asked if the TAM contract would be impacted by the proposal to involve Osborne with new build or will they bring in new resources.

E Brooks said that the Managing Director said that it would be a separate team from the TAM team; this will not affect our day to day works with Osborne's.

Cllr Griffith elaborated on that, they already have a team in place and the team already undertake buildings work for other companies.

J Hedger said they are successfully building elsewhere.

Cllr Imarni said on the suggestion of building and selling, surely this would help the funding gap.

J Deane said that they couldn't use that funding stream to do that but it would generate an income to do that.

Cllr Griffith said that they could, in a few years' time then sell the properties.

J Deane said this is possible but they would need to look at the time frame of when this is possible.

Cllr Mahmood said, whilst we could possibly use the garage developments as temporality accommodation to start with, we should look to the longer term. We are losing a lot of houses due to the right to buy so it might be good to build and keep the new housing under decorum and thus make a long term investment.

Cllr Hearn asked what bedrooms they would provide.

J Hedger said they would house a family; they are all 2 double sized bedrooms.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe asked what the quality would be.

E Brooks said that they will be to the standards of our new builds programme.

Cllr Bassadone asked, how frequent do people use the life line service.

E Brooks said that he wasn't sure exactly on figures. It's not charged by usage, the charge is just for having it.

Cllr Mahmood asked if the contract related to the number of users or subscribers.

A Vincent stated that the contract is based on the service not on the number of lines.

Cllr Hearn had concerns if they would cope adequately if there were more lines added.

Cllr Griffith asked what HCC charge was.

A Vincent said it's more expensive at £3.30 and it's to be increased next year. Our charges are still in line with other Local Authorities

Cllr Griffith said it's worth noting that it all stays within the HRA budget.

E Brooks said that they have looked at other authorities and we are reasonable, we use to be the cheapest in the county.

Cllr Griffith said that these line lines can be used for anyone and not just elderly or sheltered housing.

Cllr England stated that it's a 21% increase for lines which sounds a lot.

E Brooks said that was correct, we don't want people to hand it back because they can't afford it, then something bad to happen. We don't want this at all.

Cllr Mahmood thanked officers for their concise and clear presentations and expressed how easy it was to understand James Deane's financial presentation. He advocated keeping this format for future years too.

Action: None.

Outcome: Report was noted.

85 WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Mahmood asked the Officers for some reports for the January 2017 OSC.

The Meeting ended at 9.15 pm