

MINUTES

CABINET

10 MARCH 2020

Councillors: Williams (Leader)
Elliot
G Sutton
Anderson
Banks

Officers:	Farida Hussain	Group Manager (Legal & Corporate Services)
	James Deane	Corporate Director - Finance and Operations
	Mark Gaynor	Corporate Director - Housing & Regeneration
	Sally Marshall	Chief Executive
	Katie Mogan	Corporate and Democratic Support Lead Officer
	Emma Walker	Group Manager - Environmental and Community Protection
	Fiona Williamson	Assistant Director - Housing

Also in attendance: Councillor Garrick Stevens
Councillor Ron Tindall

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

CA/24/20 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2020 were agreed by Members present and signed by the Chair.

CA/25/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Griffiths.

CA/26/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

CA/27/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

CA/28/20 REFERRALS TO CABINET

There were no referrals to Cabinet

CA/29/20 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was noted.

CA/30/20 Q3 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Decision

That the position on the Strategic Risk Register as at the end of quarter 3, 2019/20 be noted.

Corporate objectives

All. Risk management is an essential part of ensuring that the Council meets all of its corporate objectives

Deputy Section 151 Officer:

This is a Section 151 report and hence S151 comments are included in the body of the report.

Monitoring Officer:

No comments to add to the report.

Advice

Councillor Elliot introduced the report to members. The report has been to Audit committee and they did not raise any material issues.

S Marshall said that the strategic risk register had been prepared in advance of the current coronavirus outbreak and reassured members that it was being dealt with as part of the council's business continuity and emergency plan. The situation will be kept under review and will look at whether it needs to be included on the risk register. The issue was raised at the last council meeting and DBC are working closely with HCC, the Director of Public Health, the local resilience forum and Public Health England. As a precaution, there has been increased cleaning of The Forum until further notice and a review of arrangements for sheltered housing schemes is underway. The primary focus is on hand washing and personal hygiene; reminders have been placed on screen savers, wipes have been placed on desks alongside tissues in main office area and meeting rooms. Each Assistant Director is working with their Group Managers to keep the business continuity plan under review. Staff have been provided FAQs on the Information Station and have liaised with external contractors and strategic partners to gain assurance on their measures. The

approach is calm and measured to avoid creating panic. Members will be kept informed of any changes.

Councillor Banks asked if the message was reaching community centres as they are public facing organisations.

S Marshall said information was being shared with the voluntary sector and would check with the community team to check they are engaging.

Councillor Anderson referred to the cyber-attack risk on the register. Recently Middlesbrough came under a sustained cyber-attack where systems were taken down and asked if the council had learned any lessons.

S Marshall assured members that the plan has been signed off from the National Security Centre.

Councillor G Sutton referred back to coronavirus and asked if wardens of sheltered housing schemes have been given advice on looking after residents.

S Marshall said guidance had been issued to the service from the government and the service is working closely with public health. The government has a four stage plan and currently in the first phase of containment. If instructed to move to the next phase then different arrangements will be put in place.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/31/20 HRA STRATEGIC ACQUISITIONS POLICY

Decision

1. That the policy as set out in the report to Cabinet and Appendices A, 1 and 2, be approved
2. That delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the Corporate Director Finance and Operations and the Assistant Director, Corporate and Contracted Services and the Portfolio Holder Housing and Portfolio Holder Finance and Resources to purchase assets of a value up to £5,000,000 in line with the objectives of this policy.

Corporate objectives

The Strategic acquisition policy contributes to the following corporate objectives:

Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need

Building Strong and vibrant communities

Deputy Monitoring Officer:

Local authorities have wide ranging powers to buy and develop land as set out in various statutes including:-

- Section 120 Local Government Act 1972 – power to acquire land by agreement for any purposes for which it is authorised.
- Section 9 Housing Act 1985 – power to erect houses, convert buildings on land acquired or acquire houses in order to provide accommodation.

It is good practice to adopt a policy to which sets out how the above powers are used.

Deputy S.151 Officer:

The authorisation policy and delegated authority as outlined in section 2 and section 3 of Appendix A1, details the requirement for a full cost appraisal and benefit analysis to be undertaken prior to any purchase.

It also details the requirement for officer and member scrutiny of the cost implications prior to approval.

Advice

F Williamson introduced the report. This policy is to supplement the existing development programme and sets out how the council can use other opportunities to purchase properties or land from the open market on a selective basis, similar to the council's disposal policy. This is in response to opportunities that have arisen recently where developers have been unable to sell all their properties and ask registered providers to take on additional s.106 affordable housing. This policy would be used on an exception basis rather than looking proactively for properties.

Councillor Elliot asked what the main changes in the policy were.

F Williamson said this was a new policy. A combined acquisitions and disposal policy was considered but at the time, new build costs were lower than acquiring property on the open market. Now, there has been an increase in land and build costs.

Councillor Tindall raised the issue of London boroughs purchasing properties in Dacorum.

M Gaynor said they are supposed to inform the council when they do purchase properties in Dacorum.

Councillor Williams queried the £5 million in the recommendation.

F Williamson said this was a limit on any acquisition and is the same delegation as the new build programme. Any acquisition will need to be within the business plan.

J Deane said it makes sense to have delegation in place to respond when required. The budget will need to be approved by Full Council before the portfolio holder signs

off the purchase.

Councillor Williams asked about the purchases subject to the business case and the case for social rent.

F Williamson said there would be a viability assessment on social rent and whether the council could deliver a similar property for that value. New build costs are increasing so has greater relevance now.

M Gaynor said on new builds, the affordable housing grant would discount £90k off the sale price. Developers are unlikely to offer this kind of discount so would only acquire properties if it made financial sense.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/32/20 EVENTS & CDM POLICY

Decision

That the Events Policy be approved

Corporate objectives

To comply with current H&S legislation and Implement Best Practice.

Monitoring Officer:

Both policies will ensure that health and safety law and best practice is complied with when the council is carrying out relevant activities.

Deputy S.151 Officer

No further comments to add to the report.

Advice

Councillor Banks introduced the report. This was an internal policy, setting out the key principles for how officers carry out events and risk assessments.

Councillor Anderson said from his role as Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, he was pleased to see the requirement for event organisers to provide bins for litter.

Councillor Williams said this collates many policies into one and was pleased to see that it bans the release of balloons and sky lanterns on council property.

Recommendations agreed.

The Meeting ended at 7.52 pm