

**HOUSING BOARD held at COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY,
22 NOVEMBER 2018 at 10.00 am**

Present: Councillor M Felton (Chairman)
Councillors A Dean, P Lees, J Loughlin, V Ranger and
J Redfern

Officers in attendance: A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer), R Millership (Assistant
Director - Housing, Health and Communities) and J Snares
(Housing Strategy and Operations Manager)

HB9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Farthing, Gerard and Mills.

HB10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Councillors Ranger and Redfern gave an update on the action at HB6: that 'Councillors Ranger and Redfern would take the issue of collecting Section 106 money forward to discuss with the Cabinet and Directors'. The Council was bound by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which now provided Councils with the ability to collect Section 106 receipts on developments of 14 or more properties, or on sites over ½ a hectare. Receipts could also be collected on sites where the density was lower than the NPPF standard.

Councillor Redfern commented on HB3 which summarised a presentation on specialist housing schemes for people living with dementia. A development for such a scheme within the district had failed to find a site. The Board agreed that officers should approach the Planning Development Team to see if they could suggest suitable sites.

HB11 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - PROPOSED RENT, SERVICE AND SUPPORT CHARGE INCREASE 2019/20

The Assistant Director – Housing, Health and Communities gave a summary of the report.

The Assistant Director – Housing, Health and Communities noted that the main issue with providing the Lifeline service was that even though the Council offered better value for money, the fact that other providers were cheaper meant that the

Council was losing customers. She said this was the reason why the recommendation was not to raise prices this year.

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager said the Council already did a lot of publicity work on its Lifeline service.

The Assistant Director – Housing, Health and Communities said the Council would be hit by the impact of rent charges reductions. The Government were now expecting that the Council borrow beyond the old debt cap. It was problematic that maintenance and development were interlinked, because it was necessary to borrow in order not to pay back Housing Revenue Account receipts. This was not an efficient way of working.

Councillor Dean said he wanted it to be noted that he had concerns about the government's policy of 1% rent reduction for general needs and supported accommodation.

RESOLVED to

- recommend to Cabinet for approval HRA dwelling rents for 2019/20 as detailed below:
 - General needs accommodation - a 1% reduction in rent as per central government legislation
 - Supported accommodation - a 1% reduction in rent as per central government legislation
 - All dwelling rents to be revised to the formula rent level when the property is re-let
- recommend to Cabinet for approval the increases in garage rent, support and service charges as detailed below:
 - Garage rents are increased by RPI of 3.3%
 - Housing related support charges are increased in line with actual costs
 - Intensive housing management charges are increased in line with actual costs
 - Lifeline charges remain the same
 - Heating, Service and Sewerage charges are increased in line with actual costs

HB12 VOID UPDATE

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager gave a summary of the report.

Officers said a further asbestos survey on a property would be necessary in order to carry out invasive work. It was the nature of the Council's stock's age that more problems were revealing themselves with time.

HB13 WALDEN PLACE, SAFFRON WALDEN

The Assistant Director – Housing, Health and Communities said plans had changed since this item had last been brought to the working group. The Council was now in a position to do the work itself, rather than running a complex joint venture.

In response to a Member question, the Assistant Director – Housing, Health and Communities said there would probably be up to 4 flats at the property once it had been refurbished. It would be necessary to bring an item to Council to request permission to borrow the funds for the development.

Members noted that parking for resident cars and scooters was an important issue.

RESOLVED to

- recommend to Cabinet that the redevelopment of Walden Place is progressed as a council funded and managed project subject to budget availability.
- create a task and finish group to monitor the progress of the development of Walden Place, subject to the approval of the project by Cabinet.

HB14 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager gave a summary of the report.

In response to a Member question, officers said that the Council's supply of temporary accommodation was currently enough to meet need in the area.

HB15 DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (VERBAL)

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager gave the following update on development:

Hatherley Court

Phase 1 was coming to an end. There had been issues with the contractor. It had also been necessary to redesign the water pressure system. It was hoped this phase would be finished by Christmas.

Frambury Lane and Newton Grove

The groundwork was now being prepared.

The Moors

A planning application had been submitted. It was hoped that there would be a good amount of interest from developers. Officers would be applying for a Homes England grant.

St John's Close

The Council has completed the purchase of one property in St John's Close and the other purchase was still with the legal department. The property we now own is currently going through the void process and would be used as temporary homeless accommodation, as would the other one once the purchase was completed.

The Elms, Duton Hill

The Council had accepted an offer of £325,000 for this property.

Dunmow

The Council was buying a one-bedroom property here from a housing association, this would just go into our general needs stock.

HB16 **HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE (VERBAL)**

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager said the strategy needed to be revised in relation to the local plan, to take into account the plan's approach to community-led housing and affordable housing. It would likely not be finalised until after the elections in May 2019.

HB17 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was 14 March 2019.

The meeting ended at 11.35.