

CABINET

4 NOVEMBER 2019

Present: Councillors Chowney (Chair), Forward (Vice-Chair), Batsford, S Beaney, Evans, Fitzgerald, Lee and Patmore.

211. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Judy Rogers sent apologies for absence.

212. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

213. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7th October 2019 be approved as a true record.

RESOLVED the chair called over the items on the agenda, under rule 13.3 of the council's constitution, the recommendations set out in minute number 215 was agreed without being called for discussion.

214. HOUSING RENEWAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment submitted a report outlining the Housing Renewal Financial Assistance Policy. The report presented a revised policy for 2019

The report was presented by the Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment.

The Housing Renewal Financial Assistance Policy sets out the financial tools available to the Council for providing financial assistance to households in Hastings for housing renewal.

The Council is required to have such a policy under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. This is reviewed each year and due to substantial changes, Cabinet approval is needed. Changes are for the new forms of financial assistance and support for residents. The aim is to help people stay in their accommodation longer and take up new accommodation previously inaccessible. There has historically been an underspend for this fund but with the new flexibility this policy offers it is expected that more people will be able to access the fund.

The policy includes Housing Renewal Loans, Disabled Facilities Grant Funding & the Better Care Fund and Seconded Occupational Therapists.

Housing Renewal Loans are used for improvement works due to the Council having limited resources. This is done in partnership with Parity Trust.

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Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are given to vulnerable clients to enable them to remain in their own home and remain independent. DFGs form part of the wider Better care Fund.

Occupational Therapists are seconded into housing. This is an innovative scheme which sees officers from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and the East Sussex districts and boroughs have working together.

Councillors commented that a number of their ward residents have benefitted from previous works funded through measures such as DFGs. They also highlighted the fuel poverty issues people are experiencing and how this policy would help with this. They were supportive as they felt that more people would benefit due to the increase in flexibility the new policy offers.

Councillor Batsford proposed approval of the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Evans.

RESOLVED (Unanimously)

1. Cabinet approves the revised Housing Renewal Financial Assistance Policy 2019 at Appendix 1.

2. Delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director Housing and Built Environment in consultation with the Lead Member to introduce new types of assistance that enable existing and new sources of funding to be targeted at eligible clients.

Reasons for the decision

To be able to respond promptly to freedoms provided by the provision of Disabled Facilities Grant funding through the Better Care Fund delegated authority is requested to develop and adopt new types of financial assistance for housing renewal.

215. HOUSING RENEWAL ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment submitted a report outlining substantive amendments required to the Housing Renewal Enforcement policy.

The Housing Renewal Enforcement Policy is reviewed by officers annually and amended to include minor revisions. During the most recent review officers considered the recent Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government guidance on rogue landlord enforcement and recent experience of the use of the new enforcement provisions introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

As significant amendments are required from the review Cabinet approval is required.

Under rule 13.3 the recommendations of the report were agreed without being called for discussion.

RESOLVED

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1. The revised Housing Renewal Enforcement Policy (Version 2.0) is approved.

2. Cabinet are recommended to delegate future minor amendments to the Lead Member in consultation with the Assistant Director Housing and Built Environment and Chief Legal Officer

Reasons for the decision

Due to the substantive changes proposed to the previously approved Housing Renewal Enforcement Policy Cabinet approval is required.

216. NOTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS

Notice of an urgent item was given under Rule 26 of the Access to Information Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

217. POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PURCHASES (PART 2)

RESOLVED that the public be excluded from the meeting during the, consideration of the items of business listed below because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of "exempt" information as defined in the paragraphs of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 referred to in the relevant report.

The Assistant Director Financial Services & Revenues submitted a report to consider the potential acquisition of two commercial properties within Hastings:

1. Property A
2. Property B

The report was presented by the Assistant Director Financial Services & Revenues

The Council needs to ensure that key areas remains attractive for the future to ensure businesses are attracted to, and remain in, Hastings – particularly so as the Council will need to ensure business rate growth in the future.

Both properties provide the Council with the opportunity to diversify its property holdings and change the overall risk exposure within the portfolio. The Council would also secure additional income streams. Both properties scored highly on the property matrix used to help determine purchasing.

Councillors were in support of purchasing the property due to the key locations occupied, future regeneration and development should the current leases not be renewed and also for the additional income generation.

Councillor Chowney proposed approval of the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Fitzgerald.

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RESOLVED (Unanimously)

- 1. That delegated authority be given to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Leader, to acquire Property A for the agreed costs in the report.**
- 2. To agree to purchase the long lease of Property B for the agreed costs in the report.**

Reasons for the decision

The purchase of Property A provides an opportunity to secure a significant site in a prime location. This would help secure the long term economic development of Hastings and St Leonards, protect business rate income for the future, along with the potential to develop the site further, whilst also securing an income stream to help provide services within the borough.

With regards to Property B, the Council already owns the freehold and has the potential to acquire the leasehold interest. The site is a prime location within Hastings.

The Council needs to ensure that key areas remains attractive for the future to ensure businesses are attracted to, and remain in, Hastings – particularly so as the Council will need to ensure business rate growth in the future.

Both properties provide the Council with the opportunity to diversify its property holdings and change the overall risk exposure within the portfolio. The Council would also secure additional income streams.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 6.26 pm)