
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET,
HELD ON FRIDAY, 11TH APRIL, 2025 AT 10.30 AM
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM AT THE TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-
SEA, CO15 1SE**

PRESENT:**PORTFOLIO:**

Councillor M E Stephenson	Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance (Chairman)
Councillor I J Henderson	Deputy Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration & Tourism
Councillor A P H Baker	Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning
Councillor M Barry	Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Public Realm
Councillor P Kotz	Portfolio Holder for Assets
Councillor G G I Scott	Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture & Heritage
Councillor A Smith	Portfolio Holder for the Environment

Group Leaders Present by Standing Invitation: Councillors J B Chapman BEM (Leader of the Independent Group), P B Honeywood (Leader of the Conservative Group) and P J Harris (Deputy Leader of the Reform UK Group)

Also Present: Councillor M Bush

In Attendance: Chief Executive (Ian Davidson), Corporate Director (Law & Governance) & Monitoring Officer (Lisa Hastings), Corporate Director (Finance & IT) & Section 151 Officer (Richard Barrett), Corporate Director (Operations & Delivery) (Damian Williams), Assistant Director (People) (Katie Wilkins), Assistant Director (Corporate Policy & Support) (Keith Simmons), Assistant Director (Housing & Environmental Health) (Tim Clarke), Committee Services Manager (Ian Ford), Property and Projects Manager (Jennie Wilkinson), Committee Services Officer (Bethany Jones) and Communications Officer (James Dwan)

151. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J D Bray (Leader of the Reform UK Group) and G R Placey (the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships).

152. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was moved by Councillor M E Stephenson, seconded by Councillor I J Henderson and:-

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet, held on Monday 17 March 2025, be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members at this time. Later in the meeting, as reported under Minute 160 below, Councillor Harris declared an Interest in report A.2 - Freehold Disposal of Redundant Office Site at Weeley.

154. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council announced that he had, the previous day, attended a meeting of Essex Leaders to discuss LGR, which had been held at Southend Council.

155. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY CABINET MEMBERS

There were no announcements made by members of the Cabinet on this occasion.

156. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CABINET BY THE COUNCIL

There were no matters referred to the Cabinet by the Council on this occasion.

157. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CABINET BY A COMMITTEE

There were no matters referred to the Cabinet by a Committee on this occasion.

158. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S ITEMS

There were no Leader of the Council's items on this occasion.

159. CABINET MEMBERS' ITEMS - REPORT OF THE ASSETS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO HOLDER - A.1 - CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF A CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION STRATEGY 2025 - 2028

Cabinet considered a report of the Assets and Community Safety Portfolio Holder (A.1) which presented to Cabinet the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2025 - 2028 for approval for recommendation onto Full Council for adoption, as part of the Council's Policy Framework.

Cabinet recalled that, at its meeting held on 21st October 2024 Cabinet had received a report by the Monitoring Officer issued under Section 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 in respect of the position in relation to this Council's historical omission regarding the formulation and implementation of a Crime and Disorder Strategy for the Council, as required under Sections 5 and 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Following on from that report a strategy was now presented to Cabinet for recommendation onto Full Council for adoption as part of the process to resolve that historical omission to have in place a Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy for recommendation onto Full Council for adoption.

This Portfolio Holder report therefore presented the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2025 – 2028 for approval. The strategy set out the overarching framework for the Council and its partners in the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to reduce crime and disorder by formalising the work that would be undertaken with the CSP and the Council's Community Safety Team over the next three years.

It set out priorities for reducing crime and disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), whilst protecting vulnerable people across the District of Tendring over the next three years.

It was reported that through working together, the CSP had achieved many successes in reducing crime and disorder and ASB, protecting those who were vulnerable and making the District safe and secure for residents, businesses and visitors.

As a community leader this Council was proud of those achievements that had been possible only through partnership working. To build upon previous work and to understand the challenges that continued to arise this Council would continue its work with partners to ensure a safer District for its residents.

Members were informed that the strategy was based upon a wide range of data and information, from public consultation to crime and disorder information that was brought together in an annual Strategic Assessment. Through that assessment four key themes within the strategy, as set out below, had been identified that fed into the CSP priorities. It recognised the challenges facing children, young adults and families that had evolved and continued to do so. For example, criminal gangs were targeting children to move drugs in and out of towns and other areas, including in this District. This was a national issue, but all needed to be aware of criminal gangs, and to be able to spot the signs that children might be being targeted.

- 1. Tackling violence against women and girls was at the forefront of the CSP's agenda and reflected the Government's priority in tackling this issue, following the tragic deaths of Sarah Everard, Balvinder Gahir, Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman and Julia James, and an increase in reports of domestic abuse.*
- 2. An ambition to increase support for victims and survivors, increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice and reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls.*
- 3. To work in partnership across the CSP & Health and Wellbeing Board and with partners and communities to achieve progress on our priorities during the lifetime of this strategy and seek to bring about real change for residents and visitors to Tendring.*
- 4. The CSP brings the opportunity for organisations and groups to come together to improve crime and disorder and ASB in Tendring and create an environment where people and communities can flourish, the CSP remains committed to making Tendring safe.*

Cabinet was informed that the Strategy had been considered by the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 28th January 2025. That Committee had resolved:-

- (a) the Crime and Disorder Strategy presented to the Committee be supported and Cabinet advised of this support for delivery by the appropriate partners including Essex Police;*
- (b) the Committee -*
 - (i) commends the Strategy authors for ensuring that the language and format and use of graphics to create what is an accessible document for most readers;*

- (ii) urges the Cabinet to ensure that all reasonable and appropriate steps are taken to care for the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff involved in enforcement activities and community safety;*
- (iii) recognises the increasing levels of violence against the person, shoplifting, possession of weapons, personal robbery, hate crime and domestic abuse and the need for robust action to address these growing crime problems in the District;*
- (iv) urges the Community Safety Partnership to adopt, as a priority, the need to educate and encourage confidence in the reporting of crime by the public and business managers to reduce significantly the current levels of under reporting by victims; and*
- (v) expresses its concern for delivery of the priorities on the basis of the plans announced on the day of the meeting for all 99 PCSOs in Essex to be made redundant.*

The Portfolio Holder for Assets & Community Safety's formal response to the Comments/Recommendations put forward by the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2025 was as follows:-

"The Portfolio Holder for Assets and Community Safety agrees the recommendations and comments of the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to (a) and (b) (i – iv). In relation to (b) (v) I note that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has revised the budget and that the PCSO's are set to continue in their roles, subject to the Home Office approving the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee Funding."

To ensure that the strategy was appropriately adopted, in accordance with the Council's Constitution and to evidence compliance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as amended by section 97 and 98 of the Police Reform Act 2002, that placed a requirement on Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) to develop a Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy:-

It was moved by Councillor Kotz, seconded by Councillor I J Henderson and:-

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- (a) notes the success of the Community Safety Partnership to date and the outcome of consultation and engagement with the Partnership and its constituent members in respect of the proposed Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2025-28;
- (b) notes the individual recommendations from the Community Leaderships Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28th January 2025, and endorses the Portfolio Holder's responses to those five recommendations;
- (c) notes the findings of the assessment to inform the Crime and Safety Partnership's four priorities for the District of Tendring and agrees that these priorities, as set out below, should form the Council's strategic priorities;

1. Tackling ASB and the root causes of ASB

2. High Harm Violence (with a focus on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Domestic Abuse)
 3. Drug and knife enabled Serious Violence (Gangs and County Lines)
 4. Emerging threats and Trends (i.e. Shoplifting, Vehicle Crime, Arson & Criminal Damage)
- (d) approves the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2025 – 2028, as set out in Appendix A, in accordance with Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, for recommendation onto Full Council for adoption as part of the Council's Policy Framework.

160. CABINET MEMBERS' ITEMS - REPORT OF THE ASSETS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO HOLDER - A.2 - FREEHOLD DISPOSAL OF REDUNDANT OFFICE SITE AT WEELEY

Councillor Harris declared an Interest in this matter insofar as he was the Ward Member for Weeley & Tendring.

Cabinet considered a report of the Assets and Community Safety Portfolio Holder (A.2) which would enable Cabinet to evaluate whether, given the extended negotiations, the Council should continue with negotiating an Option Agreement for the disposal of the redundant Council Office at Weeley. This was in line with Cabinet's decision on 17 December 2021 to dispose of the Weeley Office site, based on the Heads of Terms finalised by the then Leader following consultation, with the then Portfolio Holder for Housing along with the Corporate Director (Operations and Delivery), the Section 151 Officer, and the Monitoring Officer on 25 April 2023.

It was reported that Cabinet had agreed transformation proposals on 16 December 2016 which had included disposing of several Council facilities, the Offices at Weeley being one of them. On 17 December 2021 following an invitation of bids from two special purchasers, Cabinet had agreed to enter into an option agreement with the successful bidder, delegating authority to agree Heads of Terms on the principles set out in the report. Heads of Terms had been subsequently agreed on 25 April 2023.

Members were informed that since the Heads of Terms had been agreed, negotiations in respect of the full text of the Options Agreement, the legally binding document that needed to be completed for planning consent to be submitted, had been ongoing. This had still not been finalised.

It was felt that negotiations between the successful bidder and the Council in respect of the Options Agreement had reached a stalemate with each party's legal advice being on opposing sides of the opinion on a key issue, the extent and effect of highway rights adjoining the site.

This Portfolio Holder report therefore examined whether, based on the ongoing costs and liabilities of a currently vacant site, the Council should continue with negotiations to try and finalise the Option Agreement, or choose to withdraw from further negotiations to consider alternative routes to dispose of the site.

Cabinet was made aware that ongoing costs for the Weeley site were in the region of £65,000.00 p/a. Given the issues highlighted above, the risks of not being able to satisfactorily move beyond the current stalemate / stalled position were now significant.

Planning Consent, which would take a minimum of 12 weeks, possibly longer because of the size and complexity of the development, had not yet been submitted and would not be until the Options Agreement had been resolved.

In making his recommendations to the Cabinet, the Portfolio Holder had taken into account the fact that due to the complex and multilayered considerations of the transaction, it had taken 16 months to agree heads of terms for the Options Agreement and had taken a further two years in negotiations over the legally binding agreement. Those negotiations had not currently been concluded and despite significant time and effort by the legal and property teams on both sides, were at a stalemate. Each party's legal advice sat on opposing sides of the opinion on a key issue: the extent and effect of highway rights adjoining the site. Due to the time and cost that had already been expended and there being no confidence that matters could be resolved quickly, if at all, withdrawing from the agreement in order to consider alternative disposal routes had been recommended in order to mitigate further expense.

If Cabinet agreed to no longer pursue current negotiations, alternative options could be explored and brought forward in a future report for Cabinet's decision. Along with the approach adopted previously, those could also include:

- (a) *To go through an open market tender process – robust parameters would need to be put in place around timeframes for completion, but this would provide other interested parties who have made enquiries over the last three years to put their offers forward. There was however the risk that negotiations with a winning bidder could become lengthy, or the bidder might withdraw prior to the offer becoming legally binding.*
- (b) *To demolish the buildings on site to mitigate the NNDR costs – this would likely cost the Council a minimum of £200,000 (estimated on previous demolition costs) and negate the potential of any future planning consent including vacant buildings credit, or the option that any future purchaser could choose to convert or repurpose any of the buildings on site.*
- (c) *To dispose of the property by auction – this would provide a definitive end date for the completion of the sale of the property, but the guide and reserve prices were likely to be lower than would be achieved in the open market. Whilst it was possible that bidding on the day would achieve the value aspired to, there was a risk it might only achieve the reserve price.*
- (d) *To redevelop the site – this would provide additional social housing to the Council, however, it would be resource heavy and with design, planning and build likely to be a five-year project.*

Although the Portfolio Holder's report responded to the immediacy of the issues arising to date, the further report planned to be presented to Cabinet as mentioned above, would enable a timely opportunity to address or supersede the specific recommendations made by Cabinet on 17 December 2021 as deemed necessary.

It was moved by Councillor Kotz, seconded by Councillor Baker and:-

RESOLVED that Cabinet -

- (a) in the light of the ongoing delays and costs, as well as the significant risk of failing to conclude the disposal Option Agreement for the former Weeley Council Offices site, agrees to no longer pursue further negotiations with the current bidder, based on the existing Heads of Terms agreed in April 2023; and
- (b) requests Officers explore alternative disposal options and report these back to Cabinet for consideration and further decisions.

161. CABINET MEMBERS' ITEMS - REPORT OF THE CORPORATE FINANCE & GOVERNANCE PORTFOLIO HOLDER - A.3 - ANNUAL CAPITAL AND TREASURY STRATEGY FOR 2025/26 (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY INDICATORS)

Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder (A.3) which sought Cabinet's agreement of the Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2025/26 (including Prudential and Treasury Indicators) for submission to Council on 20 May 2025.

Cabinet was reminded that the Local Government Act 2003 and supporting regulations required the Council to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing, and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy (as required by Investment Guidance subsequent to the Act) that set out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments, "having regard" to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. Revised editions of both documents had come into force in 2023/24.

It was reported that the Capital Strategy continued to be combined with the Treasury Strategy into one document, which was required to be updated / approved annually. The proposed Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2025/26 was set out in Appendix A to the Portfolio Holder's report (A.3) and it continued to reflect the various changes set out in the latest Codes mentioned above.

Members were informed that the Capital Strategy element of the combined document covered the various elements surrounding capital investment decisions and the key criteria that investment decisions should be considered against.

The Treasury Strategy element of the combined document covered the various elements that satisfied the requirements of the various codes that governed the borrowing and investment activities of the Council and had been prepared in the light of advice received from the Council's Treasury advisors and reflected the latest codes and guidance.

Cabinet was made aware that Prudential and Treasury indicators were included as an Annexe to the combined strategy and were therefore included within Appendix A.

Members were advised that, under the Prudential Code, the Council had freedom over capital expenditure if it was prudent, affordable and sustainable. The Prudential Indicators either measured the expected activity or introduced limits upon the activity and reflected the underlying capital appraisal systems and enabled the Council to demonstrate that it was complying with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

Cabinet was reassured that the Council's investments would be undertaken in accordance with its Treasury Management Practices (TMPs). Those included the use of non-specified investment in property to yield both rental income and capital gains. The Codes referred to above required clear separation of commercial investments from treasury investments. As the Council only had one such investment, which was clearly identified within the Strategy and the TMPs, in continuing the approach adopted last year, it was not proposed to produce a separate suite of Investment Management Practices for that purpose.

As is always the case, other 'quality' investment opportunities would always be explored during the year in consultation with the Council's external advisors to maximise returns on investments within a continuing and overall risk-averse approach.

Cabinet was reminded that in terms of the reporting process associated with the attached strategy, this would ordinarily be based on obtaining the agreement of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance for consultation with the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, following which it would be submitted to Cabinet and then onto Full Council. However, due to the timetable of meetings and the continuing work pressures, including those associated with clearing the backlog of outstanding Statement of Accounts that had been due to external audit delays, a revised timescale was proposed.

It was therefore now proposed to seek Cabinet's agreement to the strategy via this report along with a recommendation for it to be presented to Full Council in May 2025 for approval and adoption. In terms of consulting with the Resources and Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was proposed to undertake this as early as possible in 2025/26, subject to this being included within the Committee's Work Programme.

It was felt that the above reflected a pragmatic approach to ensure that the strategy could be approved ahead of the financial year it related to or as soon as possible thereafter. However, it also recognised that if the Resources and Overview and Scrutiny Committee had any comments, which could also require further exploration / investigation, then they could be considered and reported to Full Council at a later date, where potential in-year revisions to the Strategy could be considered.

Cabinet was informed that although at a limited level at the current time, the strategy now acknowledged the potential impact from local government reorganisation, which included the requirement to take such matters into consideration as necessary, which also complemented the wider decision making proposals agreed by Full Council at its meeting on 25 March 2025 and the highlight priorities agreed by Cabinet on 17 March 2025.

To support the process of ensuring that a Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2025/26 was approved by Full Council before 1 April 2025 or as soon as possible thereafter:-

It was moved by Councillor M E Stephenson, seconded by Councillor Barry and:-

RESOLVED that the Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2025/26 (including Prudential and Treasury Indicators) be recommended to Full Council for its approval, acknowledging that consultation with the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be undertaken during 2025/26, subject to inclusion within that Committee's Work Programme.

162. CABINET MEMBERS' ITEMS - REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGENERATION & TOURISM PORTFOLIO HOLDER - A.4 - SUNSPOT WORKSPACE, JAYWICK SANDS - POST PROJECT REVIEW

Cabinet considered a detailed report of the Economic Growth, Regeneration & Tourism Portfolio Holder (A.4) which presented the post project review of the Sunspot, Jaywick Sands Workspace, community gardens, meeting rooms and event space on the former Sunspot Arcade site which had opened in September 2023, including a requirement to allocate up to £100,000 to meet additional costs emerging from the final account processes / negotiations with the associated contractor.

The report covered the following matters:-

- (1) The Sunspot – site description and Design Award success;
- (2) The development process;
- (3) Sunspot – Operational;
- (4) Sunspot – Construction (including budgets and final accounts); and
- (5) Learning.

It was reported that the recommendations within the Portfolio Holder's report were made to update Cabinet with regards to the success of a major award-winning capital project which had supported economic development, enhanced community services, raised the profile and ultimately contributing to the long-term regeneration of Jaywick Sands. The funding was required to pay the final account, and offered a value for money approach, given the small proportion of the additional finance required in relation to large overall project sum, and the significant risks of taking the contractor through an arbitration process.

It was therefore moved by Councillor I J Henderson, seconded by Councillor M E Stephenson and:-

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- a) endorses this post project and operational review of the Sunspot, Jaywick Sands, which highlights the success of the workspace since opening in September 2023, the challenges in construction, and the lessons learnt for future regeneration projects; and
- b) in respect of the additional costs of potentially up to £100,000 that have emerged from the project's final account processes, agrees that this be funded by a transfer within the existing HRA Capital Programme / wider HRA revenue budgets as part of finalising the overall HRA outturn position for 2024/25.

163. CABINET MEMBERS' ITEMS - REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO HOLDER - A.5 - HOMELESSNESS IN TENDRING

Cabinet considered a detailed report of the Housing and Planning Portfolio Holder (A.5) which set out the current levels of, and causes of, homelessness. In particular, the number of households presenting as homeless, numbers placed in temporary accommodation and data on rough sleeping and how those pressures had continued to grow. It also set out the various actions that were being put in place to address those pressures.

Cabinet was aware that the Council's Housing Solutions Service was experiencing increasing numbers of homelessness cases. This was impacting on the service's ability to discharge the Council's statutory duties effectively and cost efficiently. The Council was committed to ensuring accessible high-quality customer services, but the levels of demand meant that, in some instances, the Council was finding it increasingly challenging to meet the minimum levels of statutory housing duties.

Members were reminded that the Homelessness Act 2002 set out the definition of homelessness and the duties that local housing authorities owed to those who were accepted as being homeless or threatened with homelessness. Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 provided the primary homelessness legislation setting out the statutory duties on local housing authorities to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to those who were at risk of being homeless or actually homeless.

It was reported that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 had placed new duties on local housing authorities to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, not just those that had priority need under the Act. This legislation had sought to provide increased protection to people facing homelessness. It had extended the length of time an individual or household could be seen as at risk of homelessness, from 28 to 56 days, which in turn had increased the length of a local housing authority's prevention duty.

More recently, the enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 had placed a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children. All eligible homeless survivors of domestic abuse automatically received 'priority need' status for homelessness assistance.

Cabinet was advised that the Council had seen an 87% increase in homelessness approaches between 2018/2019 and 2023/24 and a 26% increase in homelessness applications during the same period.

Members were informed that the top five causes of homelessness had remained static during this time and included the loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the private rented sector, relationship breakdown, eviction by family, domestic abuse and eviction by friends.

There had been a 77% increase in the number of households being placed in temporary accommodation between 2018/19 and 2023/24.

Expenditure by the Council on temporary accommodation in the first nine months of 2024/25 had been £2.1 million.

Expenditure on rent deposits in the same period had been £164,713.36 and a further £153,617.52 had been spent on rent in advance payments all of which had been paid to assist those faced with homelessness into settled accommodation.

Cabinet was made aware that the cost of providing temporary accommodation and other homelessness services was accounted for within the General Fund and, alongside the money committed from the Council's General Fund budget to fund homelessness services, funding was awarded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to support the prevention and reduction of homelessness and rough sleeping. Confirmation had already been received that the Homelessness Prevention

Grant funding for 2025/26 would be £1,456,782, an increase from just over £1 million in 2024/25.

As set out in previous reports, the cost of responding to homelessness was presenting a significant resource / financial challenge for most Local Authorities nationally and was of such significance that it was now one of the highest risk factors in terms of the wider financial sustainability of Councils. Although financial support from the Government was welcomed, it fell significantly short of the associated costs.

With all of the above points in mind, it was proposed that a Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Working Group be established, to be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning, to support the Council in exploring and identifying measures aimed at relieving the pressure and spending on the service. Membership of this group would be predominantly Officers.

Although various options would be explored via the proposed working group, measures initially identified to relieve pressure and reduce spend were focussed on:

- *Potential to increase income streams;*
- *Reducing the use of temporary accommodation through early prevention measures;*
- *Ensuring the quality of the temporary accommodation offered; and*
- *Increasing the availability of accommodation in the private rented sector.*

To ensure that the Council responded to the unprecedented levels of demand in order to not only reduce costs but also ensure that the Council met its statutory homelessness duties and that homeless households and those threatened with homelessness were adequately assisted and supported:-

It was moved by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Scott and:-

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- (a) notes the current pressures on the homelessness function provided by the Council and the level of spending on the service including provision of temporary accommodation to comply with its statutory duties;
- (b) endorses the setting up of a Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Working Group, to be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning, to explore and identify measures aimed at relieving the pressure and spending on homelessness; and
- (c) requests that a report is presented to Cabinet within six months setting out the initial outcomes from the activities undertaken by the working group to inform future decisions.

164. CABINET MEMBERS' ITEMS - REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO HOLDER - A.6 - CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF A REVISED HOUSING UNDER OCCUPATION TRANSFER INCENTIVE POLICY AND A NEW HOUSING COMPENSATION POLICY

Cabinet considered a report of the Housing and Planning Portfolio Holder (A.6) which presented to Cabinet the following Housing Policies for approval and adoption:

- Housing Under Occupation Transfer Incentive Policy; and
- Housing Compensation Policy.

It was reported that this Portfolio Holder report presented two housing policies for approval. Those policies amended and formalised the work that was already undertaken in the Housing and Environmental Health service.

The Council recognised that there was an existing demand for family size properties, as demonstrated by the number of applicants on its housing register. It was essential that the Council did all that it could to support tenants seeking to downsize from family size accommodation and to maximise the use of its housing stock.

Cabinet was informed that the Housing Under Occupation Transfer Incentive Policy set out how the Council would encourage and assist tenant's under-occupying family and adapted accommodation to downsize into other accommodation thereby releasing family or adapted accommodation for others in housing need.

Members were advised that the Housing Compensation Policy set out the approach that the Council would take in response to requests for compensation to ensure it acted in a fair, consistent and transparent matter. Whilst committed to providing excellent housing services for its customers, the Council accepted that there would be occasions when Council services might not meet those high standards and customers were inconvenienced or left out of pocket as a result.

Where a complaint was justified, an acknowledgement and apology might be sufficient. However, where a complainant had suffered some disadvantage, inconvenience or loss because of the service failure experienced, other remedial action might need to be considered including financial compensation.

Cabinet was made aware that these policies complied with the Regulator of Social Housing's revised Consumer Standards that had come into effect from 1 April 2024 as well as the Housing Ombudsman's guidance in relation to compensation.

To ensure that the policies were appropriately adopted, in accordance with the Council's Constitution and to evidence compliance with regulatory standards:-

It was moved by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Scott and:-

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- (a) approves and formally adopts the revised Under Occupation Transfer Incentive Policy and the new Housing Compensation Policy;
- (b) approves that the Under Occupation Incentive Policy be funded by refocusing the existing cash incentive scheme budget of £0.060m held within the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme along with the corresponding change in the revenue contribution to the capital programme in 2025/26; and
- (c) authorises the Corporate Director (Operations and Delivery), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing, to make future updates or amendments to

these policies and that this will include an annual review of the Housing Under Occupation Transfer Incentive to assess its effectiveness.

165. MANAGEMENT TEAM ITEMS

There were no such Management Team items on this occasion.

The Meeting was declared closed at 11.41 am

Chairman