



Housing Policy Working Party
DRAFT Minutes of meeting held on
Wednesday 25 October 2017 at 2pm
in the Kasen Room

Present

Councillors

Tony Boto (Chair)
Richard Lewis
Steven North
Helen Harrison

CllrTB
CllrRL
CllrSN
Cllr HH

Sharn Matthews, Executive Director (SM)
 Carol Conway, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager (CC)
 Aine Cooper, Housing Enabling Officer (AC)
 Richard Palmer, Planning Policy and Conservation Manager (RP)
 Louise Bagley, Housing Services Officer (LB)

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	Apologies	
	Paul Bland, Jenny Walker & Councillor Sarah Peacock.	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting	
	The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.	
3.	Matters arising	
3.1	Older People's Report - LB noted that no initials had been included in the action box at item 5.4 of the minutes and queried who should do this. It was agreed that LB would reactivate the link on the website and RP would provide some wording to accompany the link.	LB/RP
4.	Updates	
4.1	Housing	
	Additional burdens funding will be spread over 3 years, ENC will receive £46,632 and have done well in comparison with other councils. IT changes for reporting and monitoring requirements will need ongoing additional costs of approx. 10k per year. Government have also issued a new Homelessness Code of Guidance for consultation.	
4.2	Welfare reform	
	Lucy Hogston had advised that Universal Credit had not been paused and full service will be rolled out shortly from the Job Centre at Rushden.	
5	Housing Mix Report	
5.1	A discussion took place regarding the next steps with the Housing Mix	

	report. The consultant had delivered to the brief and the Policy and Resources Committee on 9 October 2017 had agreed to publish on the council's website, and for the Housing Policy Working Party to consider how the recommendations should be taken forward.	
5.2	WP members agreed there was a need for a better housing mix across the district to include affordable homes, particularly in the villages, as well as the right housing to attract higher earners to the district. It was suggested that a parking survey at Rushden Lakes may show where employees live. A better mix was being encouraged at Rushden East and Tresham Garden Village and it was agreed it was important to get the right mix on these developments.	
5.3	The Government had issued a follow up consultation to the Housing White Paper 'Housing in the Right Places'. RP would circulate to WP members – closing date for consultation is 9 th November	RP
5.4	Evidence from the housing mix and older people's studies will feed into the emerging SPD on Housing Mix but account still needs to be taken of the adopted plan and government policy.	
5.5	To assist in future strategy and policy formation it was agreed that the key policy points from the study would be summarised for the December 2017 working party meeting and a framework document should be produced for the February 2018 meeting to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of housing mix across the district • What mix we require going forward e.g. for older people, affordable housing • Specific geographies – where needs larger properties and where smaller • What has caused any changes to the evidence base in the JCS • Statistics on house sizes, lack of bungalows etc. 	RP RP
6	Homelessness prevention fund	
6.1	Housing Policy Working Party members considered a report from CC concerning the establishment of a discretionary Homelessness Prevention Fund to be used to prevent and alleviate homelessness, with the expenditure incurred funded from the additional ring-fenced Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.	
6.2	It was agreed that grants, rather than loans, should be offered and that the fund should be operated on a pilot basis with a review of its efficiency and value for money after 12 months.	
6.3	Uses for this fund could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of rent in advance to secure accommodation from Registered Providers and in the private sector • Payment of deposits to secure private rented accommodation • Payments towards rent or mortgage arrears to prevent evictions • Payment towards past tenant arrears which may be preventing permanent accommodation being offered by Registered Providers. 	

6.4	After some discussions around the amounts to be offered it was agreed that £500 was right for rent arrears and past tenant arrears but that for deposits up to £500 or one month's rent would be offered	
6.5	It was noted that some further discussion around delays with payments due to Universal Credit waiting times and what help may be available from Revenues and Benefits would be needed and then incorporated into the procedure.	LB/CC
6.6	Local connection criteria should be expanded to include the armed forces.	CC
6.7	Stage payments rather than a lump sum for rent arrears needed to be included in the procedure to ensure that tenants were continuing to pay rent and also assisting to reduce arrears.	CC
6.8	Subject to the above amendments, the report was approved by WP members and if possible a report would be submitted to Finance Sub-Committee on 13 th November 2017.	CC
7	Work Plan Update	
7.1	Housing allocations policy - implementation had been delayed due to IT changes. Now to be implemented November 2017	
7.2	Housing Options Contract – renewal is due for March 2019. Initial paper will be brought to the WP meeting in December for consideration.	CC
8	Risk Review	
8.1	It was considered that the fire risk needed to be reviewed as a corporate risk. This would be taken up as part of the internal fire safety audit being undertaken.	CC
8.2	An additional risk may need to be included in respect of the council's capacity to deliver the required housing mix for the district.	RP/CC
9	AOB	
9.1	No items noted	
10	Next meetings – all 2pm in the Kasen Room	
	Wednesday, 13 December 2017 Wednesday, 7 th February 2018 Wednesday, 28 th March 2018 Wednesday, 9 th May 2018	