



MINUTES

Environment, Health and Housing Committee

Date:	Tuesday, 5 November 2019
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Committee Members Present:	Councillor Ben Aitken (Chairman) Councillor Viv Willder (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Frank Andrews, Shirley Green, Noreen Griffiths, Peter Hardy, Will Harris, Gavin Harrison, Karen Henshaw JP, Angela Jacques, Roger Lloyd.
Other Councillors Present:	Councillor Karen Buckley
Officers Present:	Tracy Manning, Kathy Winstanley, Kirstine Riding, Ursula Seddon, Andrew Baron, Katharine McDonnell, Alan Curphey and Natalie Reeves, Citizens Advice Bureau and Chris Standish, Regenda Housing Group.
Other Attendees:	Six members of the public

Public Platform

Patrick Brown from Lindsay Court Residents Association addressed the committee. He was invited to speak by the Chairman prior to agenda item 6, Lindsay Court.

Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. No interests were declared on this occasion.

Councillor Noreen Griffiths declared a personal interest, the nature of the interest being that she was a member of the Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau

1. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee meeting held on 3 September 2019 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

2. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 23 (c):

Councillor Shirley Green for Councillor Bobby Rigby.

Councillor Angela Jacques for Councillor Michelle Morris.

Decision Items

3. Disabled Facilities Grant Update and Amendment to the Housing Services Private Sector Assistance Policy

Ursula Seddon, Principal Housing Services Officer, introduced an update report regarding the Disabled Facilities Grant programme within Fylde, which sought approval for an amendment to the housing assistance policy, particularly with regard to adaptations grants.

Mrs Seddon explained that the Housing Services Private Sector Assistance Policy was initially approved by Committee in June 2017, and amended in June 2018. The policy included recommendations intended to increase the take up of Adaptation Grants including the removal of the test of resources and an increase in the upper grant limit.

The policy change had achieved its aim, but Mrs Seddon explained, that a review of the policy was necessary to take account of an increase in the number of applications without a corresponding increase in the Better Care Fund budget allocation. She advised that it was likely without an amendment there would be a funding shortfall.

A number of questions were asked regarding the test of resources, which Mrs Seddon addressed in turn.

Without further discussion, it was RESOLVED

1. To note the content of the report and the progress made in administering the Disabled Facilities and Adaptations Grants in Fylde provided under the Better Care Fund.
2. To approve the amendments to the Housing Services Private Sector Assistance Policy in respect of Adaptations Grants as detailed in Appendix 1 as the council's adopted policy to apply to all new applications received on or after 6 November 2019.

4. Global Resettlement Scheme

Kathy Winstanley, Head of Health and Environment introduced a report providing details of the new Global Resettlement Scheme, which set out the Government's ongoing commitment to resettlement of refugees. She explained the priority would be to continue to resettle the most vulnerable refugees but to broaden the geographical focus beyond the Middle East and North Africa region. The new Global Resettlement Programme would be very similar to the current programmes delivered in Lancashire, but would consolidate all current resettlement programmes. A new process for emergency resettlement would also be developed, allowing the UK to respond quickly to instances of heightened protection need, providing a faster route to protection where lives were at risk.

She advised that the Government had pledged to resettle 5,000 refugees each year of the scheme, across the country.

She also advised that Lancashire would pledge to resettle 30 families at a time, with a proposed 5 families in each authority area. Each authority would welcome refugees for resettlement every two years, therefore if Fylde wished to take part, the proposal was to resettle five families in 2021 and again in 2023.

Mrs Winstanley explained that the Refugee Integration Team at LCC was willing to coordinate a Lancashire wide response to the new Global Resettlement Scheme, building on the successes of the Lancashire Resettlement Programme in order to make the resettlement process as efficient, effective and seamless as possible.

The Integration team was also willing to take some of the current responsibilities shouldered by district councils including sourcing housing and other property-related requirement, commissioning casework support and managing the local integration fund.

The committee discussed the merits of the LCC Integration team taking on more of the responsibilities that had previously been for Fylde officers, and particularly the impact on the resources of the housing team.

It was RESOLVED:

1. that Fylde Council wished to be part of a new 4 year cycle of refugee resettlement in Lancashire, under the Global Resettlement Scheme, and agreed to welcome one cluster of five families firstly in 2021, and again in 2023; and

2. that the Committee requested Lancashire County Council to take responsibility, in partnership with Fylde, for
 - a. Sourcing housing and other property-related requirements such as furnishing (subject to inspection and approval of Fylde Housing Officers)
 - b. Commissioning casework support
 - c. Managing the Local Integration Fund

5. Care and Repair Service (Wyre and Fylde) 2015/16 to 2018/19

Kirstine Riding, Housing Services Manager, introduced a report regarding the Care & Repair Service (Wyre & Fylde). It was explained that the service was administered from Wyre Council on behalf of both Councils. The service was a “not for profit” home improvement agency. It was available to older people and adults with disabilities (‘eligible persons’) in Wyre and Fylde, and was delivered in two distinct parts.

1. The first element of the service was the Core Service which was designed to facilitate repairs and adaptations to enable someone to stay in their home.
2. The second element of the service was the Handyman scheme. The aim of the scheme was to keep people safe in their homes and to prevent the risk of trips and falls. It provided minor aids and help with small jobs around the house to eligible persons.

A review of the Care and Repair service/commissioning strategy was undertaken by Lancashire County Council (LCC) in 2014 and the outcome of which required a ‘partnering arrangement’ between Fylde and Wyre councils to agree, with LCC, to deliver the joint service, with Wyre Council as the lead authority. Additional services were included and the annual contribution of £30,000 provided by each Wyre and Fylde Councils be fixed and committed for 3 to 5 years along with funding from LCC under the Integrated Home Improvement Service. The current contract value in 2019/20 from LCC was £168,460.24. With annual contribution of £30,000 from both Wyre and Fylde Councils, the total funding to run the service in 2019/20 was £228,000.

On the 14th February 2019, LCC Full Council meeting approved a proposal for the cessation of the Integrated Home Improvement Services across Lancashire. As a result Wyre Council have approached Fylde Council for an agreement in principal to continue the Care and Repair Service in its current form to continue to provide the Core Service and the Handyman Services from 31st March 2020. The request to Fylde Council was to continue with the £30,000 commitment under the current funding agreement, plus as additional £40,000, for a grant period to be agreed. A total annual funding commitment of £70,000.

Due to the issues with future funding uncertainty Wyre Council have reviewed the management structure of Care and Repair service as they felt there was a need to better align Care and Repair services with delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) in Wyre and to have a management system in place that works closely with the delivery of DFGs and Care and Repair Services.

Ms Riding provided detailed statistics regarding the use of the service, the types of users and the number of successful benefit claims made with assistance from the service. However she cautioned that much of the data combined information from both Wyre and Fylde. Therefore it is difficult to quantify the benefit of the service to residents in Fylde. She advised that the committee may wish to invite representatives from Wyre to further explore issues regarding the joint service.

Following a brief discussion, it was RESOLVED to

1. Approve Fylde Council continuing to fund the service at the current level of £30,000 for 2020/21, to allow the Council time to consider the most appropriate arrangements for providing the Core and Handyman service in Fylde. This would be dependent on funding being confirmed by the CCG and data provided on a quarterly basis for residents accessing the service within Fylde;
2. Wyre Council be invited to come to a future meeting of the Committee to provide information on the delivery of the service in Fylde and costs to deliver that service; and
3. Fylde Council to explore potential sources of funding to develop the service within Fylde.

6. Community Housing Fund Phase 2 – Lindsay Court

Patrick Brown, a representative from the Lindsay Court Residents Steering Group addressed the committee under the public platform. He provided the committee with a view from the residents, their campaign, the difficulties faced by the residents, and thanked the support of the council and councillors so far.

Kirstine Riding introduced a report with an update on the Community Housing Fund project and to request approval for £20,500 of Phase 2 Community Housing Grant Funding to continue the work with residents from Lindsay Court Steering group. The funding would support the appointment of professional partners; Cass Associates and ForHousing to carry out extensive feasibility work, with a view to find a workable solution for the regeneration of the site.

She provided a detailed background to difficulties faced by the residents, and the project so far.

She advised that the project was now at a Phase 2 stage. Phase 2a would clarify the viability as to whether to project could proceed further. It would include establishing the expectations, values and support of the freeholder and larger leaseholders of properties on the site, a full detailed building survey of all the blocks, establishing Homes England expectations and conditions regarding tenure mix, funding and best practice support, exploring the implications of the Land Tribunal decision going forward and continuing support of the established Residents Association. Phase 2b would not progress without freeholder cooperation or clarity on the implications of the Land Tribunal decision. Phase 2b would involve continued engagement with Homes England to identify acceptable tenure and grant funding sources, extensive work with all residents, formal valuation of each unit and gross acquisition figure to secure whole/part of the site.

Chris Standish from Regenda Housing Group described the work undertaken to date and how the success of the project so far was due to the partnership working with the council, councillors and the MP, alongside the residents.

Councillor Buckley, at the invitation of the Chairman and as one of the ward councillors, addressed the committee and spoke in support proposals and the work undertaken thus far.

There were a number of questions regarding financial implications for residents, ground rents and maintenance charges, tenancies and leases. Ms Riding provided detailed answers highlighting the complexity of the issues at Lindsay Court.

Following a brief debate, it was RESOLVED to

1. Note the contents of the report and the progress made to date in delivery of the Community Housing Fund project in supporting residents from Lindsay Court; and
2. Recommend to Finance and Democracy Committee approval of a fully-funded revenue budget increase in the total sum of £20,500 for 2019/20 to be funded by a proportion of the remaining Community Housing Fund, to enable the Lindsay Court Housing project to progress to Phase 2a as detailed within the report, leaving a balance of £241,000.

7. Update on the Condition of the Mobile CCTV Vehicles

Kathy Winstanley, Head of Health and Environment, introduced a report updating members on the condition of the 2 CCTV vehicles operating in the Fylde.

She advised that two CCTV vans operated in Fylde. The maintenance of the vehicles was the responsibility of the police. She further advised that the vehicles were over ten years old. The St Annes van was in a poor state mechanically but the CCTV equipment was sound. Whereas the Kirkham vehicle was sound mechanically but the CCTV equipment had failed. Blackpool Council's CCTV team, who maintain the CCTV equipment had advised that

it was possible to transfer the CCTV equipment from the St Annes van into the Kirkham van, to have one viable vehicle.

The police had advised that the CCTV vans were a good visual deterrent and their preference would be to invest, with partners, in replacement CCTV vans in future rather than rapid deployment poles or fixed cameras.

For clarification, it was advised that recommendation two would mean that any future funding, such as partnership funding available, would be brought back to a future meeting for consideration and for the committee to balance the need for the vans against the requirements of the regulations.

Following a brief debate, it was RESOLVED to

1. That the Committee with due consideration to the report, supported the rationalisation of the 2 CCTV vehicles to one in order to provide a viable service in 2020/21.
2. That Officers were requested to investigate the costs of replacement CCTV vehicles with a view to submitting a future capital bid in 2021/22 and exploring other funding opportunities in the meantime.

8. Carbon Reduction

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources introduced an item on Carbon Reduction. She advised that at the request of the Chairman, members were requested to consider broadening the remit of the cross-Committee Working Group considering plastic conscious issues to include consideration of carbon reduction. Whilst the use of single-use plastics contributes to greenhouse gas emissions there were other council policies and activities which could impact on the matter favourably.

It was suggested that the existing Working Party widen its remit to extend to carbon reduction with a view to the Council working towards net-zero carbon by 2050 developing an action plan identifying actions within the control of the Council to limit the impact of climate change.

It was proposed the current cross-party Working Group which was drawn from the membership of both the Environment, Health and Housing, and Operational Management Committees be broadened to include two members of the Planning Committee.

It was RESOLVED

To broaden the remit of the Plastic Conscious Fylde Working Group to include two members of the Planning Committee and to broaden its remit to include the development of a carbon reduction Action Plan renaming it the Carbon Neutral Working Group.

Information Items

The following information items were received and noted by the committee.

9. Empty Residential Homes Position Statement

The committee received information regarding the council's Empty Residential Homes Position Statement. The committee requested that officers investigate the possibility of increasing the council tax further for those homes empty for longer than two years.

10. Annual Report Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) 2018/19

The committee received the Annual Report from Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau.

Alan Curphey, Chair of the Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau Committee, and Natalie Reeves, Chief Officer of Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau, highlighted a number areas within the annual report, praising the locally based volunteers which allowed the service to reach many more residents. She also highlighted two particular projects that the service ran. The first was The Rosemary Project, a project combatting domestic violence, where the service worked closely with partners at LCC and Fylde Coast Womens' Aid. The second was the At Home Project, which offered a Citizens Advice at home for carers and disabled clients.

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