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## PLANNING & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 28 JUNE 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Leo Walters (Chairman), Malcolm Alexander (Vice-Chairman), David Burbage, Gerry Clark, David Evans and David Hilton

Also in attendance: Councillor Derek Wilson (Lead Member for Planning) and Jason Veradaguer.

Officers: Tanya Leftwich, Chris Hilton and Hilary Hall

### ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor Leo Walters (proposed by Councillor David Burbage and seconded by Councillor Malcolm Alexander) and Councillor Malcolm Alexander (proposed by Councillor David Hilton and seconded by Councillor David Evans) were elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively, for the ensuing municipal year.

**RESOLVED: That Councillor Leo Walters be elected Chairman and Councillor Malcolm Alexander be elected Vice-Chairman, for the ensuing municipal year.**

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Malcolm Beer.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

It was announced by the Chairman that the meeting was being recorded.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting of Monday 18 April 2016 were agreed as a correct record.**

### KEY WORKER HOUSING IN THE ROYAL BOROUGH

The Head of Commissioning - Adult, Children and Health, Hilary Hall, informed Members that the report set out proposals for providing more housing opportunities for key professional groups: teachers, social workers and clinical health staff, who take up employment in the Royal Borough. It was noted that the proposals were set in the context of the local manifesto commitment and the government focus on home ownership.

Members were informed that the Royal Borough's key worker private rental property portfolio would be managed through the Council's trading company, RBWM Property Company Limited, with the purpose of optimising the property portfolio. It was noted that refurbishment of the portfolio would be funded through existing Section 106

monies allocated for affordable housing and then transferred to the Company for rental.

The Head of Commissioning - Adult, Children and Health explained that work would continue with housing association partners to develop innovative schemes for key workers, releasing the agreed £500k of investment into the existing Do it Yourself Shared Ownership scheme and developing partnership agreements with the Homes and Communities Agency to release investment to support key worker housing.

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel asked the following questions – they hoped the answers would be available for the Cabinet meeting on Thursday night:

- That all Military Personnel (Army, Airforce, Navy) be included in the key worker definition.
- If a key worker gained accommodation and then their location of employment changed (e.g. to High Wycombe) would they lose their accommodation?
- How would the prioritisation of applications from key workers be undertaken? It was felt criteria needed to be clear from the start or it would be challenged.
- Covered by key worker policy?
- If a key worker changed profession would they lose their home?
- Are there any limitations on who key workers could sell their property to?
- How does para 2.7 square with para 2.5 – will there be further refinement?
- Para 2.10 ('over the next 18 months....') – the Panel was under the impression that the Council did not have a defined policy type and that it preferred ownership to rental options?
- Are they 100% rented? On assured shorthold tenancies?
- It was suggested that the key worker document on the web had reduced in detail and might need to be re-looked at again.
- Would salaries be looked at when deciding whether someone qualified as a key worker?
- It was stated that the shared ownership scheme might or might not involve a key worker – it was asked whether this was true as key worker housing was listed in the report under the key implications section as being a measure of success?
- That the terms needed to be set out along with information about how it could be renewed (if renewal was an option).

**The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel agreed in principal with the recommendations in the report to Cabinet but felt that it was not a workable scheme as it currently stood as the report was lacking detail.**

## PROPERTIES FOR HOMELESS RESIDENTS

The Head of Commissioning - Adult, Children and Health informed the Panel that the report sought approval for the use of two Council owned properties by a voluntary organisation to provide services for homeless residents in Maidenhead on a pilot basis. It was noted that both properties were currently vacant and were part of the council's commercial property portfolio.

Members were informed that the first property would be used to provide day services for homeless residents, including access to washing facilities, clean clothes and food with the potential for limited emergency overnight accommodation. It was noted that

the other property would be used to provide time limited accommodation for a small number of residents as a halfway house before moving into suitable accommodation. The Head of Commissioning - Adult, Children and Health informed the Panel that residents in the halfway house would be accessing the standard therapeutic rehabilitation services delivered through the Drug and Alcohol Action Team to enable them to make the transition. It was noted that this provision would work in partnership with the other services already working with homeless residents in the Borough and which are supported by the Royal Borough through support contracts.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- That it was two years continuous residence.
- Jason Veradaguer, who currently resided in the tent outside the Town Hall, questioned why the former Leader of the Council had spent £20k to put up wire fencing when it could have been spent on homeless people. Councillor Burbage explained that the fence was not his decision and that he had been pleased when it had been taken down.
- Jason Veradaguer informed Members that he did not want to live in a tent, especially at 46 years of age. It was noted that Jason had found Councillor Dudley to have been very accommodating of his situation.
- Jason Veradaguer questioned why there were eighteen new builds in Woodlands Park that were about to be demolished when they could be used by the homeless in the Royal Borough.
- The Head of Commissioning - Adult, Children and Health stated that she would be happy to look at a halfway house option.
- Councillor David Evans stated that he believed the number of homeless residents in the Royal Borough should be included in the report.
- That the day service could accommodate 80 people.
- That the residential service could accommodate 10-12 bed spaces, not necessarily to be used at the same time.
- That in addition to the accommodation the Council would be providing a whole range of services which would include therapeutic rehabilitation services, education, mentoring, etc which was not detailed in the report. It was noted that this detail would be specified in the S106 detail.
- Jason Veradaguer informed the Panel that he believed there to be between 40-50 people born in the Royal Borough that were currently sleeping rough in car parks, in the subways, behind the Library, etc. It was noted that Jason believed approximately 95% of the homeless in the Royal Borough would want to be housed.
- Jason Veradaguer informed the Panel that he had lived in the Royal Borough all his life and was a homeless builder. It was noted that Jason simply wanted somewhere to live so he could return to working as a builder.
- Jason Veradaguer stated that he believed the proposals outlined in the report would benefit the homeless in the Royal Borough.

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel commented that they would like to see an indication ASAP of the speed in which these proposals could be implemented if approved by Cabinet, the prioritisation of how it could happen and who would benefit. The Panel hoped the target of the 01 April 2017 could be brought forward.

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel asked what the Council's plans were with regard to getting empty homes in the Royal Borough back in use. The Head

of Commissioning - Adult, Children and Health agreed to take that question away and provide a response.

It was requested that an update be brought back to the Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel in December.

**The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel unanimously agreed to recommend to Cabinet the following:**

- i) Approves the use of two Council-owned properties for a day service and emergency housing for homeless residents.**
  
- ii) Delegates authority to the Managing Director/Strategic Director Adult, Children and Health Services and Strategic Director Corporate and Community Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to apply for all necessary consents and permissions to enable the recommendation i) and to finalise the details of the Service Level Agreement.**

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the following future meeting dates (7pm start):

- Thursday 18 August 2016.
- Tuesday 18 October 2016.
- Thursday 17 November 2016.
- Monday 23 January 2017.
- Wednesday 19 April 2017.

The meeting, which began at 7pm, finished at 7.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....