

Decisions of the Housing and Growth Committee

25 January 2021

Members Present:-

Councillor Richard Cornelius (Chairman)

Councillor Sarah Wardle (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Daniel Thomas

Councillor Peter Zinkin

Councillor Thomas Smith

Councillor Alex Prager

Councillor Ross Houston

Councillor Paul Edwards

Councillor Sara Conway

Councillor Kath McGuirk

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Growth Committee held on 24 November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Wardle declared a pecuniary interest in relation to item 11 by virtue of the company with which the lease was looking to be agreed, currently being a client of her employer.

Councillor McGuirk declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 10 by virtue of being an employee of the John Lewis Partnership.

Councillor Houston declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 8 and item 9 by virtue of being a Council appointed member of the Barnet Group Board and by virtue of having a £1 non-recoverable share in Notting Hill Genesis.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS

Cllr Kath McGuirk – Self-employed ad small business support.

Members agreed to discuss this item as part of the discussion on the Recovery report.

Cllr Ross Houston – Cladding and appropriateness of insulation materials at Zenith Close.

Councillor Houston introduced his Members items and asked officers to comment on the actions he requested.

The Deputy Chief Executive updated the Committee that major registered providers were working on the cladding issues directly with the MHCLG. The MHCLG was co-ordinating and prioritising the cladding issue across the whole country. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that it would be sensible to have an update on the Barnet Homes programme, to confirm no inappropriate materials were being used within the council's schemes. Cladding reports are published on the website, which would be shared with the committee and any issues for discussion could be brought back to a future meeting.

Members asked that landlords be informed that the Council did not want any discontinued material to be used. Officers agreed to work with MHCLG to ensure any cases raised, around suspected inappropriate materials being used, were dealt with appropriately.

Members also agreed to meet with residents to discuss the matter, ensuring that residents understood that the Council was working with MHCLG to resolve cladding issues.

Cllr Paul Edwards – Homelessness and evictions – follow-up.

Members agreed to discuss this item as part of the discussion on the Recovery report.

Cllr Sara Conway – Review of boiler and general maintenance in Barnet Homes properties.

Councillor Conway introduced her Members item and stressed the seriousness of the living conditions of some residents living without heating for long periods of time.

Officers advised that a programme of work had been started, to review the boiler and maintenance in Barnet Homes properties and agreed to take forward all the actions outlined within the member's item.

7. ASSET ACQUISITION STRATEGY

The Chairman introduced the Asset Acquisition Strategy report. The proposed strategy set out how the Council would acquire assets, identify, and manage risks and the overarching governance arrangements that would be deployed to improve the acquisition of assets as outlined in Appendix A to the report.

Following consideration of the item, the Chairman moved to vote on the Officer's recommendations as outlined in the report.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	6
Against	0
Abstain	4

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- **Approved the Asset Acquisition Strategy as per Appendix A of the report.**

8. ANNUAL REVIEW OF COUNCIL DWELLING RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION RENTS FOR 2021/22

The Chairman introduced the report outlining the proposed changes to the Council dwelling rents and service charges including accommodation rents, to take effect from the 1st April 2021.

Following discussion, the Chairman moved to vote on the Officer's recommendations as outlined in the report.

The votes were recorded as follows:

:

For	10
Against	0
Abstain	0

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- **Noted and commented on the proposed rent increase in line with Government policy for existing council tenants as set out in paragraph 1.5 for social rent dwellings and 1.7 for affordable rent dwellings to take effect from 1 April 2021.**
- **Noted and commented on the proposed rent increases for temporary accommodation to the relevant outer London Local Housing Allowance rates as set out in paragraph 1.9 to take effect from 1 April 2021.**
- **Noted and commented on the proposed service charges and garage rents as set out in paragraphs 1.11 to take effect from 1 April 2021.**

Noted that the proposed rent increase and charges would be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee as part of the budget proposal paper and then take to Council for approval.

9. RECOVERY PLAN

The Chairman introduced the report on the latest Covid-19 recovery plan for the Thriving workstream. The report provided an update to Committee on progress across a number of core themes under the workstream including business support, unemployment, homelessness, housing supply and digital connectivity.

Councillor McGuirk discussed her Members item on self-employed and small business support. She raised the issue that many businesses had not been able to work or generate income due to the lockdown restrictions, however, were not eligible for furlough arrangements. Councillor McGuirk requested that figures outlining how many people and business had been affected and the types of support available to assist them, be included within the body of the recovery plan report submitted to the next Housing and Growth Committee meeting. Councillor McGuirk also asked for an update on what assistance could be provided to those working in the creative industries, which had been particularly adversely affected by Covid-19.

Officers advised the Committee, that work had been done in collaboration with the FSB to identify sole traders and small businesses seeking grants and offering support. Officers notified the Committee that a significant amount of small business grants had already been distributed out across the borough to 4,800 businesses but acknowledged that there was still more work to be done. Officers also flagged two schemes currently available and advertised on the Council's webpages; 1) Additional restrictions scheme for small businesses and 2) Self employment income support scheme run by central

government. Officers agreed to incorporate an update on this work within the next recovery report.

Councillor Edwards introduced his Members item on homelessness and evictions. Councillor Edwards thanked Barnet Homes for all the work that had done to prevent any evictions taking place since March 2020. He asked for clarification on the reference to targeting recruitment in the care sector within the report and asked that the Council worked to improve the image of the care sector, including increasing training, professionalism, and the rates of pay. Councillor Edwards also asked officers to update the Committee on the situation regarding homeless applications within the private sector and what the impact of the governments ban on bailiff evictions ending on the 21st February might be.

The Assistant Director of Development and Economy advised that employment opportunities had arisen within the care sector and the Council was working to support and develop individuals currently unemployed, into these roles. The Covid vaccination programme had provided a number of opportunities for individuals to find employment via supporting this campaign, which would also result in permanent and long-term employment.

The Barnet Group Chief Executive advised that there had been a reduction in the amount of homeless applications within the private sector, however the rate was not zero, but a significant decrease. The homeless service was supporting a far higher number of single homeless people than families during this time, which brought different challenges in terms of finding suitable and available accommodation. Following the 21st February, officers felt there could be difficulties due to the restrictions around face to face consultations, particularly when assisting families, but felt that any rise in applications would be gradual. The Barnet Group Chief Executive advised that they had seen a trend, in which landlords were being more realistic about who they would rent to and for how long they would provide tenancies.

Councillor Edwards asked that if the ban on bailiff evictions ends on the 21st February, an update be brought back to the next meeting to outline what the implications of the changes have been on the community. Officers agreed to provide a report.

Councillor Conway asked officers if accreditation schemes could be used to assist residents moving from one sector to the other, to demonstrate their transferable skills and for those that have been volunteering during the pandemic or whilst on furlough. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that an accreditation scheme could be looked into as part of the overall piece of work being done on helping people get back into work following the pandemic.

Following discussion of the report, the Chairman moved to vote on the recommendations as outlined in the officer's report.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	10
Against	0
Abstain	0

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- **Noted the report.**
- **Requested that the figures outlining how many people and businesses had been affected by the pandemic and the types of support available to them be included in the next update report.**
- **Requested that an update be provided at the next meeting on the implications following the potential ban on bailiff evictions on the 21st February 2021.**

10. BRENT CROSS CRICKLEWOOD UPDATE REPORT

The Chairman introduced the Brent Cross Cricklewood update report, which provided an update on the progress across the programme since the last committee meeting on the 24th November 2020, with particular regard to the updated Brent Cross West delivery programme, the acquisition of Brent Cross Retail Park, delivery strategy of the replacement homes for Part 1 of the Whitefield Estate and land assembly strategy.

Members asked officers to review the engagement strategy with residents. Members also requested Ward Councillors automatically be invited to the working group, in addition to the Administration and Opposition leads. Members and officers agreed to further discuss the best way to involve interested parties in the forum, outside of the committee meeting.

Members enquired as to whether the Donoghue site could be moved at the same time as the waste management site. The Brent Cross Programme Director advised that meetings with Donoghue were taking place, and an update would be provided in due course.

Following discussion of the item the Chairman moved to the vote on the officer's recommendations.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	6
Against	0
Abstain	4

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- 1) Noted the updated Brent Cross West programme to reflect the agreed rail possessions with Network Rail and that the station contract with Volker Fitzpatrick has been updated to align with this programme as set out in paragraph 1.7;**
- 2) Approved the council entering into contract with Network Certification Body (NCB) to undertake the role of Assessment Body (AsBo) to provide assessment with regard to CSM-RA; the services of a Notified Body (NoBo) and Designated Body (DeBo) under the Railways Interoperability Regulations for GRIP 5-6 of the Brent Cross West Station project (paragraph 1.8);**
- 3) Delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive to procure in accordance with all lawful requirements, including the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended or as appropriate replaced) and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules the necessary resources to maintain the BX programme and manage**

the Brent Cross South Retail Park and extend the existing contracts in place as required in accordance with the Council's procurement rules on the contract as set out in paragraph 1.16 and 1.53 of this report.

- 4) Noted that the legal documentation for the student accommodation block on plot 25 as set out in this report is being progressed with a target date end of January and delegated authority to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee to finalise legal agreements and to authorise that the Council enters into contract with BXT JVLP and Vita in relation to plot 25 and completes any other related contractual documentation including agreements relating to Station; the form of lease and development matters; and change of use of the ground floor and, a side letter relating to the operation of particular clauses in the project agreement and approval of the forms of documents restricting competing development on neighbouring sites, and relating to failure to satisfy the funding condition (paragraph 1.19);
- 5) With respect to the relocation of Part 1 of the Whitefield Estate to Plots 53 and 54 on Brent Terrace, approved that officers progress the mitigation strategy to commence works on site as set out in paragraphs 1.40-1.41 of this report and delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee to finalise that strategy, make the required consequential changes required to the Funding Development Agreement with L&Q to implement the strategy and authorise the commencement of works and to complete any documentation required to give effect to the same (paragraphs 1.40-1.41);
- 6) Noted that the Brent Cross South Business Plan was updated in November 2020 to reflect the consequential changes resulting from the approval of the First Phase Proposal, the completion of the Homes England Loan Facility and the acquisition of the Toys R Us site (paragraphs 1.23-1.26);
- 7) Noted that the Urgency Committee held on 5 January 2021 approved the Heads of Terms with Hammerson and Aberdeen Standard appended to the Exempt report to the Committee for the council to acquire the Brent Cross South Retail Park and delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Housing and Growth Committee and Director of Finance to a) finalise and execute the sale contract and any associated and required documentation on behalf of the council to enable completion of the acquisition by 29 January 2021; and b) to make the required changes to the Capital Financing Requirement and associated indicators to enable the Chief Finance Officer to drawdown the required borrowing to facilitate the purchase from the Public Works' Loans Board (paragraphs 1.48-1.53) ;
- 8) Noted the expiry dates for the confirmed Compulsory Purchase Orders within paragraph 1.54 of this report and delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee to finalise the land acquisition strategy to deliver comprehensive development and to authorise serving any notices required to implement the Compulsory Purchase Orders or to effect the acquisition of all interests and estates in the relevant

part of the site including any required Notice to Treat or to Enter, or General Vesting Declaration/s notices as identified in the land acquisition strategy in line with the programme (paragraphs 1.54-1.58);

- 9) Noted that the governance arrangements for the BX programme have been reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and approved that the remit for the BX South Shareholder Working Group be widened as set out in paragraph 1.70 of this report (paragraphs 1.65-1.72).

11. RENEWING LEASES FOR PTS OFFICE AND MINIBUS PARKING AT NORTH LONDON BUSINESS PARK

The Chairman introduced the report which update the committee on the Passenger Transport Service (PTS) leases for the PTS office and minibus parking, which expires on the 28th February 2021. The report request approval for renewing both the office and the minibus parking leases.

Following discussion, Members agreed that the current cost of the rent for the office and minibus parking spaces was at an unacceptably high rate and that the Council should only enter into this agreement if there were a break clause at 12 months, rather than the current proposal of 24 months. This would allow officers an opportunity to investigate alternative options for parking, which during the pandemic had not been possible.

Members moved to amend the recommendation, which was unanimously agreed as follows:

That the Committee approve the renewal of the Passenger Transport Service (PTS) office and minibus parking leases for 1 year only from 1st March 2021 to 28th February 2022, for an annual rent of £98,166 plus VAT for the office, and £495,000 plus VAT for the minibus parking spaces. The lease would be reviewed after the 12-month period and is subject to Stamp Duty and Land Tax at £4,329 and reasonable legal fees.

The Chairman moved to vote on the recommendation, as amended.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	9
Against	0
Abstain	0

*Cllr Wardle did not vote on this item – due to her pecuniary interest outlined earlier in the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

Approved the renewal of the Passenger Transport Service (PTS) office and minibus parking leases for 1 year only from 1st March 2021 to 28th February 2022, for an annual rent of £98,166 plus VAT for the office, and £495,000 plus VAT for the minibus parking spaces. The lease would be reviewed after the 12-month period and is subject to Stamp Duty and Land Tax at £4,329 and reasonable legal fees.

12. REFERRAL FROM CHILDREN, EDUCATION & SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE - HOUSING NEEDS OF CARE LEAVERS - TO FOLLOW

The Chairman introduced the referral report from Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee on the Housing needs of Care Leavers.

Following discussion, the Chairman then moved to vote on the recommendations as outlined in the report.

The Committee unanimously agreed the recommendations.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- 1) Recognised the importance of effectively meeting care leavers' housing needs, as set out in the report at Appendix 1.**
- 2) Agreed to the following work being undertaken:**
 - a. A review of the Care Leaver Housing Protocol, including reviewing the target of providing long-term housing for 4 new care leavers per month.**
 - b. A review of existing and known pipeline local affordable housing stock, and to explore other options such as shared accommodation in larger properties to ensure more long-term tenancies can be secured by care leavers, reflecting growth in this cohort.**
 - c. The Barnet Group be invited to collaborate with council officers, including Family Services, to identify the most effective route to purchase approximately 30 units for use by care leavers, if possible, within existing programmes.**
 - d. To ensure that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to be considered by [Policy and Resources] Committee in due course reflects the need to deliver further properties to meet future forecast need.**
 - e. A review of the banding options for care leavers.**
 - f. To ensure when sourcing additional temporary accommodation, that accommodation that is suitable for care leavers is included and explore the acquisition of new provision that specifically meets the needs of increased numbers of care leavers.**
 - g. A review of the booking policy for transitional / TA accommodation for care leavers, with a view to moving away from the nightly booking arrangement to enable stability within ring-fenced units.**
- 2) Noted that on completion of the activities outlined in recommendation 2), recommendations that cannot be implemented within existing officer delegations be reported to a future Committee for decision.**

13. POST-DECISION SCRUTINY - RENT RELIEF POLICY DPR

The Chairman introduced the post decision scrutiny report for the rent relief policy DPR. In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Urgency Committee on the 27th April 2020 provided delegation to Chief Officers (in consultation with the relevant Committee Chairmen) to take decisions on business-critical matters normally reserved to theme committees. The Committee resolved that any and all such decisions taken, shall be reported back to the relevant committee for post-decision scrutiny.

Following discussion of the item the Chairman moved to the vote on the officer's recommendations.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	10
Against	0
Abstain	0

RESOLVED that the **Committee:**
Noted the decision taken by Chief Officers via delegated powers in response to the Coronavirus Pandemic or related matters.

14. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

15. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

16. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

None.

17. ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEM(S) THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

The meeting finished at 8.35pm.