

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 26 September 2017

Subject: Housing

Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Stavrou

Recommending:

That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.

The Council's approach to Fire Safety for its housing stock following the Grenfell Tower fire

1. In my last report to Council, I explained that the Council has always taken fire safety and the safety of residents very seriously, and our officers have worked very hard over many years to continue to improve fire safety in our housing stock. I also summarised some of the key points of the Council's approach to fire safety.

2. I have visited a number of our blocks with officers to satisfy myself that all possible measures are being taken to reduce risks of fire and that the safety of residents is maximised.

3. On 9 October 2017, at my request, there will be a special meeting of the Communities Select Committee. At the meeting they will be considering a report on Fire Safety which will set out all of the Council's actions taken to date to reduce the risk of fire in our properties. The Committee will be asked to make recommendations on any actions in the future which may reduce risks further. All Members are invited to attend this meeting.

Flexible Homelessness Support Grant – update

4. At its meeting on 15 June 2017, the Cabinet agreed that the Government's Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (required to be ring fenced to be used on homelessness services), already received by the Council in the sum of £277,000 in 2017/2018 and £313,000 to be received in 2018/2019 be initially used by the Council to continue working with Genesis Housing Association in order to provide private rented accommodation to homeless applicants in order to prevent homelessness, with a budget of £60,000 in both 2017/2018 and 2018/19 to fund the cost of the Association's Management Fees.

5. It was further agreed that following the cut in housing related support funding by Essex County Council, the Council meets its own housing related support costs at the young parents scheme Railway Meadow, Ongar with a budget of £29,000 in both 2017/2018 and 2018/2019.

6. A number of homelessness initiatives already agreed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 2 February 2017 (Minute 130 refers) in the sum of £43,500 in both 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 will also be met from the grant resulting in a saving to the General Fund.

7. A further report will be submitted to the Cabinet in October this year for consideration to be given for the use of the balance of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant of around £131,000 in 2017/2018 & £167,000 in 2018/2019.

Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme - update

8. On 5 September 2017, the Communities Select Committee considered a report on the Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme. Following the meeting, officers are now drafting a revised Scheme which will be considered by an external Legal Advisor.

9. When advice has been received the draft Scheme will be amended in accordance with the advice. The Council will then enter into a 12 week consultation with every private Registered Social Landlord of social housing with which it has nomination arrangements, Town and Parish Councils, the Tenants and Leaseholders Panel and partner agencies with an interest in the Scheme. The Scheme will then be considered by the Cabinet around February/March 2017. The new Scheme will come into force as soon as time allows for re-registrations and verifications of all home seekers currently registered.

Outsourcing of the Careline Alarm Monitoring Service - update

10. At its meeting on 2 February 2017 (Minute 121 refers), the Cabinet agreed that the Careline Alarm Monitoring Service be outsourced to an external provider. The procurement process managed by the procurement arm of the North Housing Consortium (NHC), has now been completed. I have agreed that the highest scoring tenderer Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Limited be appointed as the provider of the monitoring of the Council's Careline Service. As part of the Due Diligence process, officers have visited their Control Centre in Doncaster, interviewed their management team and were more than satisfied that they can meet with the requirements of the Council's detailed specification.

Housing Repairs - Relocation to Oakwood Hill, Loughton Depot – update

11. At its meeting on 5 September 2017, the Cabinet agreed that the Housing Repairs Service and the Housing Assets Team be re-located to the Oakwood Hill Depot in Loughton and co-locate with the existing Fleet Operations and Grounds Maintenance Services. It was further agreed that as Housing Portfolio Holder I would consider a report on the appointment of a Multi-discipline Consultancy Service to oversee the detailed design, procurement process and contract management of the project. As a result, an alternative venue will be sought elsewhere in the District for both the Council's CountryCare and Nursery Services as they will now be unable to be re-located to the Depot as originally planned. A Planning Application will be submitted for the required off-site parking for staff and visitors during working hours.

Attendance by Essex Police District Commander

12. On 7 November 2017, Essex Police District Commander will be attending the meeting of the Communities Select Committee starting at 7pm in the Council Chamber. All Members are welcome and are able to submit questions in advance of the meeting to Adrian Hendry, Democratic Services by email at democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk