

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 15 November 2022 at 2.15 pm

### **Present**

#### **Councillors**

R J Dolley (Chairman)  
J Cairney, S J Clist, D R Coren, R Evans,  
P J Heal and R F Radford

### **Apologies**

#### **Councillor(s)**

J Bartlett

### **Also Present**

#### **Councillor(s)**

G Barnell

### **Also Present**

#### **Officer(s):**

Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Claire Fry (Housing Services Operations Manager), Mike Lowman (Building Services Operations Manager), Andrew Seaman (Member Services Manager) and Jessica Rowe (Member Services Apprentice)

## **36 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.04.14)**

Apologies were received from Cllr J Bartlett.

Cllr G Barnell attended via ZOOM.

## **37 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.04.32)**

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations where appropriate

## **38 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.04.45)**

There were no members of the public present

## **39 MINUTES (0.05.11)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022 were agreed as a true record and duly **SIGNED** by the Chairman

## **40 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.05.29)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make

## **41 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - OPTIONS (0.05.45)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a \*report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the updated Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Corporate Manager for Finance outlined the contents of the report and stated that the report was a slimmed down version that was presented to the Cabinet and contained significant budget gaps.

Consideration was given to:

- There was no specific service budget for Homes PDG
- Fees and Charges would be presented in agenda items 7 & 8
- Action had been taken on a reduction in voids
- The purchase of two properties (HMO's) had been approved by Cabinet assist with homelessness in the District
- The Council has to be a responsible landlord
- An update on the Housing Strategy would be brought forward in January 2023
- Two modular builds were being undertaken on redundant garage plots
- The provision of temporary pods for homeless people should be investigated

Note: \*report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

#### 42 **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING FEES AND CHARGES 2022/23 AND 2023/24 (0.41.32)**

The Group had before it a \*report from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing revised fees and charges for locally set Private Sector Housing statutory functions.

The officer outlined the contents of the report and stated that it presented an update to private sector housing fees and charges both for in year and 2023/2024 onwards. There was no budget for the fees and charges as they related to enforcement action in relation to transgressions from legislation.

Consideration was given to:

- There was provision in legislation which allowed charges for enforcement action and to set financial penalties
- Fees must reflect the true cost of providing the service and not provide a profit
- Financial penalties cannot be set locally and are set out in legislation
- The numbers of notices issued due to damp in properties would be provided after the meeting

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** that:

1. The Cabinet approve the revised locally set fees and charges as set out in annexes 1 and 2
2. That Cabinet approve the revised Policy on the Use of Financial penalties as set out in Annex 4

(Proposed by Cllr S J Clist and seconded by Cllr B Evans)

**Reason for the decision:** To ensure fees are set within the scope of legislation and the Enforcement Policy.

Note: \*report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

#### 43 **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) FEES AND CHARGES 2022/23 (1.03.06)**

The Group had before it a \*report from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing revised fees and charges for discretionary functions provided under the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The officer outlined the contents of the report and stated the HRA had a modest budget and 99% came from rents with the levels set by the Government. The remaining fees were discretionary. The scope to set fees was quite limited.

Consideration was given to:

- Fees had not been renewed for a number of years

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** that:

1. The Cabinet approve the revised discretionary fees and charges for 2022/2023 as set out in annexes 1, 2 and 3
2. The Cabinet approve the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation adjustment (within range 2 – 10%) for discretionary fees and charges to be applied on the 1<sup>st</sup> April every year (in addition to the in year recommendations set out in annexes 1, 2 and 3)

(Proposed by S J Clist and seconded by Cllr J Cairney)

**Reason for the decision:** The Council had not increased the fees and charges for these services for some years and they require updating

Notes:

- \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes
- Cllr R Dolley made a personal declaration as he was a trustee of Old Heathcote's Community Centre

#### 44 **MID DEVON HOUSING DRAFT POLICY RELATING TO TENANT USE OF CLOSED CIRCUIT TV (CCTV) & CAMERA DOORBELLS (1.14.12)**

The Group had before it a \*report from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing the MDDC Housing draft policy relating to tenant use of closed circuit TV (CCTV) and camera doorbells.

The officer outlined the contents of the report and stated that the new policy was required due to the increasing number of requests from tenants.

Consideration was given to:

- Concerns from neighbours on the use of CCTV and them being intrusive
- Legislation on the use of such camera's must be adhered to
- Legal duty towards vulnerable tenants

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED**:

1. That Cabinet recommends to Council the adoption of the Tenant CCTV and Camera Doorbell Policy as set out in annex 1

(Proposed by Cllr S J Clist and seconded by Cllr P J Heal)

**Reason for the decision:** To provide greater clarity to stakeholders and ensure that those tenants fitting such systems were doing so lawfully

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

#### 45 **MID DEVON HOUSING SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT (1.30.08)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a \*report from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing the regular quarterly update on enforcement and other activity undertaken by Mid Devon Housing.

The officer outlined the contents of the report and stated that it contained the regular service delivery report for Q2 and covered tenancy housing management and building repairs.

Consideration was given to:

- From April 2024 the Government were setting a new set of measures for all housing providers who would be required to report on tenant satisfaction measures
- How best to approach debt, work across different departments managing multiple debt and applying early detection
- Concerns regarding the increase in possession orders and if this was attributed to tenants in financial need
- The Housing service worked alongside the corporate debt team to identify households in multiple debt
- There was earlier informal engagement with tenants to understand the nature of their debt issues
- The financial reasons why voids were kept empty for a period of time instead of being re let
- The small number of frauds

Note: \*report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

#### 46 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (1.52.36)**

Members **NOTED** the items listed in the work programme for the next meeting.

(The meeting ended at 4.10 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**