

**Housing and Public Protection Policy Development Advisory Group**  
**15 MAY 2017**

Present: Councillors: Philip Circus (Chairman), Andrew Baldwin, Alan Britten, Matthew French, Nigel Jupp and David Skipp

Apologies: Councillors: Toni Bradnum, Paul Marshall, Mike Morgan, Jim Sanson and Ben Staines

19 **TO APPROVE THE NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Group approved the notes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

20 **FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME**

The Chairman advised Members that he had written to the Secretary of State expressing support for proposals to make it compulsory for businesses to display their food hygiene rating. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) had responded by broadly welcoming HDC's support. The FSA were consulting on the need for radical changes to the current system of food safety regulation but had advised that the Food Hygiene Rating System would remain an important tool in raising standards. The new proposals would remove some of the food safety functions from local authorities and move to a more centralised service. The Head of Environmental Health & Licensing advised that HDC had raised concerns with the FSA over the fragmentation of food safety delivery and the extra burdens it would place on businesses.

21 **HOUSING STRATEGY POSITION STATEMENT - ANNUAL REVIEW 2016/17**

Members of the group received the draft Housing Strategy Position Statement. The Head of Housing Services advised that there had been a light touch review and assessment of the Council's Housing Strategy for 2013-15.

This review would inform the creation of the new strategy. It was noted that the new strategy could not be fully developed until the implications of new government policy as recommended within the 2017 Housing White Paper had been fully considered. The Homeless Reduction Act would also change local authorities' responsibilities and have an impact on the new strategy.

The draft Position Statement set out the four overarching objectives of providing:

1. An increasing supply of homes that people in need can afford
2. Effective support for homeless households
3. Appropriate housing provision for vulnerable people
4. Thriving rural communities

Members of the PDAG noted the contents of the draft position statement, which would be presented to Cabinet on 25<sup>th</sup> May. The statement set out the measures that had been taken and progress made to the end of the financial year 2016/17.

Members discussed options for the new strategy, including the potential for HDC to create a housing or property company, options for delivering on smaller sites and the commitment to deliver additional temporary accommodation, possibly through the purchasing of existing housing, to ease the need for bed and breakfast accommodation and to support homeless people and those in housing need. Members were concerned that sufficient measures were in place to support the small number of rough sleepers in the district, and recognised that meeting their needs was a complex issue.

With regards to the level of affordable housing currently achieved and the target of 240 per year as set out in the Horsham District Planning Framework, the Head of Housing Services advised that changes in government policy regarding rent structure had slowed the rate of units achieved by housing associations. However, the projected delivery rate was significantly higher.

## 22 **COMMUTED SUM FUNDING FOR CHRIST'S HOSPITAL**

The Head of Housing Services introduced the draft report which recommended the Council provide financial support to enable the development of seven new affordable rented homes on land at The Old Goods Yard, King Edward Close / Station Road, Christ's Hospital.

The seven units would be funded from the Housing Enabling Grants budget, which included commuted sums that had been secured through s106 legal agreements from developers for off-site affordable housing.

The proposal would help the Council achieve its target of delivering 240 affordable homes a year, and assist the Housing Association in delivering the affordable accommodation for persons in housing need on this site.

Members welcomed the report and agreed that the use of commuted sums held by HDC for new affordable housing, or for changing shared ownership to affordable rent, should be regularly reported to the PDAG.

- The Chairman agreed that Commuted Sums be a standing item on the PDAG's agenda.

## 23 **TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION RENTS**

The Head of Housing Services advised that temporary accommodation rents would be reduced from 12<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The reductions were in response to a change in government policy regarding the payment of management fees, and

chargeable limits. The result would be cost neutral for the Council and help families meet their own rent costs through the continued implementation of welfare reform.

*The meeting closed at 6.28 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm*

CHAIRMAN