

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 10 January 2019

Present:

Councillor

Councillors Foale, Foggin, Holland, Owen, Pattison, Pierce, Robson and Vizard N

Also present:

Director (BA), Service Lead Housing Tenancy Services, Principal Accountant Corporate, Technical Accounting Manager and Democratic Services Officer

In Attendance:

Councillor Emma Morse

Councillor Laura Wright

Councillor Phil Bialyk

- Portfolio Holder for People
- Portfolio Holder for the Housing Revenue Account
- Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Sport

1

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held on 1 November 2018 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

2

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

3

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the next item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE EXECUTIVE

4

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXETER'S EXTRA CARE SCHEME

The Service Lead Housing Tenancy Services presented the report that set out the options available to the Council in relation to the management of Exeter City Council's Extra Care Scheme (Exeter's Extra Care Scheme) (EECS). The accommodation would comprise 53 self-contained flats with communal areas and facilities for older persons with care needs and would be held as an asset within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Two options were presented, with option one requiring the housing management functions to be carried out in house by the City Council's Housing Service team to include repairs, maintenance, signing up new tenants and any other tenancy related matters and with all care elements to be provided on a commissioned basis and option two requiring the housing management function to be carried out by a care provider under a management agreement in addition to the care element.

The Director (BA) and Service Lead Housing Tenancy Services responded to Members' queries:-

- the Portfolio Holder for the Housing Revenue Account and the Director responsible for Housing would have delegated powers to agree the terms of the management agreement and the final agreement would be reported to this Scrutiny Committee for information;
- to ensure that employee terms and conditions were of the highest standards only reputable companies would be invited to tender with detailed assessment of all aspects of the bids. It was expected that employee terms and conditions would closely follow those of existing council contracts and there would be robust monitoring of employee conditions through the contract term;
- the management agreement included a nomination panel comprising representatives of the City Council, Devon County Council and the care provider and preference would be given to Exeter residents;
- the length of the contract would be negotiated and it was anticipated would be a minimum of five years and could be as much as 30 years to include at least a six month period for notice of termination; and
- the City Council had neither the experience nor capacity to run a care facility of this nature and therefore officers' recommendation that option two be supported was in an effort to recognise this and minimise the risk to the Council while working to ensure high quality provision for prospective residents of EECS.

Scrutiny Committee - People noted the report and requested Executive to:-

- (1) agree the preferred option two, as set out in the report, in relation to the management of Exeter's Extra care Scheme (EECS);
- (2) grant delegated authority to the Director responsible for Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the Housing Revenue Account, to agree the eligibility criteria for allocations to EECS in negotiation with Devon County Council and the nominated care and housing management provider; and
- (3) following the appropriate procurement, agree to the engagement of specialist consultants to provide expert advice on the agreements with Devon County Council and a care/management provider.

Members felt that the Council should, longer term, develop a philosophy and approach that in-house provision was largely a default position and that the Council should begin to prepare for this by developing its workforce accordingly. It was therefore agreed by Members of this Committee that Executive be asked to ensure that its objectives for the City and the prioritisation of Council resources reflected such an ambition and invited Executive to discuss this issue with a wider group of Members.

The meeting returned to Part I

ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE EXECUTIVE

5

HOUSING RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES : 2019/20

The Technical Accounting Manager presented the report setting out proposed changes to council dwelling rents, garage rents and service charges with effect from 1 April 2019.

The Director (BA) updated Members on the impact on the Council of the Universal Credit roll out advising that budget provision had been made to reflect the experience of other areas in terms of the impact on rent arrears and that the Council was working with the Department of Work and Pensions and the Citizens Advice Bureau to ensure a smooth handover of responsibility for Universal Support for April.

People Scrutiny Committee noted and supported the report and recommended Executive to approve:-

- (1) a reduction in rents for Council dwellings of 1% from 1 April 2019;
- (2) garage rents increasing by 3% from 1 April 2019; and
- (3) service charges to remain at their existing levels, with the exception of the charges specified below from 1 April 2019:-
 - 10% increase in emergency lighting testing in line with routine testing costs and additional installations;
 - 20% decrease in respect of the Older Persons' property service charges reflecting a frozen post; and
 - 5% reduction in respect of door entry systems in line with system maintenance costs.

ESTIMATES, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND FEES AND CHARGES

6

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - ESTIMATES/NEW CAPITAL BIDS/FEES : 2019/20

The Technical Accounting Manager presented the report on the Housing Revenue Account Estimates and Fees and Charges, which outlined the strategic framework within which the estimates had been prepared, changes in accounting practices which affected all budgets and gave detailed reasons for major changes in the Management Unit estimates. A detailed schedule of the capital programme for Housing was also attached to the report together with details of the Council Own Build programme. She highlighted key changes.

Members welcomed the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap. They noted that work on site was about to start on the Rennes House lifts and, at the same time, the wider refurbishment procurement work would also be carried out.

People Scrutiny Committee supported the draft Revenue Estimates for 2019/20, the proposed Capital Programme, Fees and Charges and Council Own Build for further consideration by Executive on 12 February 2019 and Council on 26 February 2019.

PEOPLE - GENERAL FUND - ESTIMATES/NEW CAPITAL BIDS/FEES AND CHARGES : 2019/20

The Principal Accountant presented the report on the People Revenue Account Estimates and Fees and Charges, which outlined the strategic framework within which the estimates had been prepared; changes in accounting practices which affected all budgets and gave detailed reasons for major changes in the Management Unit estimates. A detailed schedule of the capital programme for People was also attached to the report.

People Scrutiny Committee supported the draft Revenue Estimates for 2019/20, the proposed Capital Programme and Fees and Charges for further consideration by Executive on 12 February 2019 and Council on 26 February 2019.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.15 pm)

Chair