

additional papers 2

Executive Committee

Tuesday 9th July
2013
7.00 pm

Committee Room 2
Town Hall
Redditch



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Welcome to today's meeting.

Guidance for the Public

Agenda Papers

The **Agenda List** at the front of the Agenda summarises the issues to be discussed and is followed by the Officers' full supporting **Reports**.

Chair

The Chair is responsible for the proper conduct of the meeting. Generally to one side of the Chair is the Committee Support Officer who gives advice on the proper conduct of the meeting and ensures that the debate and the decisions are properly recorded. On the Chair's other side are the relevant Council Officers. The Councillors ("Members") of the Committee occupy the remaining seats around the table.

Running Order

Items will normally be taken in the order printed but, in particular circumstances, the Chair may agree to vary the order.

Refreshments : tea, coffee and water are normally available at meetings - please serve yourself.

Decisions

Decisions at the meeting will be taken by the **Councillors** who are the democratically elected representatives. They are advised by **Officers** who are paid professionals and do not have a vote.

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5. Housing Density Targets Task Review - Final Report

(Pages 70 - 73)

To receive the final report of the Housing Density Targets Task Review.

(Minute extract from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2nd July 2013 attached)

(All Wards)

10. Lease of the Anchorage

(Pages 74 - 77)

Head of Housing

To consider a proposal to lease The Anchorage for the purpose of employment training.

(Report to follow)

(All wards)



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2nd July 2013

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Bush (Chair), and Councillors Roger Bennett (substituting for Councillor Gay Hopkins) Andrew Brazier, Simon Chalk, Carole Gandy, Andrew Fry, Alan Mason and Yvonne Smith

Also Present:

P Finnemore (Commissioning Manager: Young People, Worcestershire County Council)

Officers:

R Cooke, C Felton and J Staniland

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and M Craggs

MINUTE 16

HOUSING DENSITY TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Chair of the Housing Density Targets Task Review, Councillor Bush, delivered a presentation on the outcomes of the review. During the course of this presentation the following matters were raised for Members' consideration:

- The group had consulted widely including with: relevant Officers; the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport; local estate agents; a representative from the local Asian community; and a local housing developer.
- A questionnaire had been circulated for the consideration of local estate agents. Key points raised by the estate agents in their completed responses included concerns that there were limited numbers of three and four bedroom properties in the Borough and limited numbers of bungalows.
- Estate agents were able to provide examples of individuals and families leaving the Borough to live in neighbouring districts due to a greater number of larger properties that would meet their needs and expectations.

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Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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- Existing rules regarding housing density frequently deterred developers from building multiple bungalows on sites, due to the space required for bungalows.
- Self-build properties provided an opportunity for people to build houses to a size that would meet their needs. The Chair suggested that the option to secure larger self-build properties would help to attract more businessmen to live permanently in the Borough.
- Self-build properties had been found in other parts of the country to have a beneficial impact on the local community and residents were often keen to remain in these homes years after they had been built. Also these residents found that they developed new skills as a result of participating in self-build projects.
- Many members of the local Asian community lived in inter-generational households. Often families struggled to purchase properties in the Borough suitable for inter-generational living, and a significant number of the larger houses that met this requirement were located near the town centre and were not high quality buildings.
- Developments on large sites were eligible for discounts on road infrastructure. Similar discounts for road infrastructure were not offered for developments on smaller sites.
- Small, local housing developers, who often employed local people, struggled to compete with larger developers.
- The group had considered suggesting that the first measure Members were proposing should be applied to sites less than 0.5 hectares. However, the group had discovered that this would not have been realistic as it could have had a detrimental effect on the council's ability to meet housing targets. The Task Group had been advised that the same requirement for sites less than 0.16 hectares in size would not have the same impact.
- Officers had been fully consulted during the course of the review and had expressed support for Members' proposals prior to the Committee meeting.

Following delivery of the presentation the Committee debated the findings of the review. There was general consensus amongst Members that more bungalows were required in Redditch, particularly to meet the needs of an aging population. This would also potentially help to increase the number of three and four bedroom properties available to families further down the housing ladder, as elderly people would be moving from previous family properties.

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A Member noted that when the review had been launched Officers had suggested that there was already flexibility within the local planning policy framework to adapt housing density requirements for developments as and when required. However, the group expressed concerns that under existing arrangements Planning Officers tended to be minded to enforce the housing density rules.

The proposal regarding self-build properties was discussed in detail. Reference was made to paragraph 4.9 of the report, where the Task Group had suggested that more land should be allocated to self-build properties. Officers explained that the Council could not allocate land to self-build properties, partly because it would not be possible to enforce construction of self-build properties following the granting of planning permission, Officers remained supportive of the aim to increase the number of self-build properties. Concerns were expressed that the issue of allocation had not been raised prior to publication. However, it was agreed that references to allocation should be reviewed with a view to suggesting that self-build should be encouraged.

The number of developments that would be influenced by the group's recommendations was discussed. Some Members in particular commented that the group's proposals appeared to have focused on particular social groups within the population, rather than on the needs of all residents. However, other Members commented that these proposals would help to attract residents who would live in larger, more expensive properties and pay higher levels of Council tax. There was also the possibility that these residents would be encouraged to establish businesses in the area, to the benefit of the local economy. Furthermore, over 90 per cent of developments in the Borough were for larger sites and would not be affected by the proposals.

The potential impact of the proposals on the availability of affordable housing in the Borough was also considered. Some concerns were expressed that larger executive homes would not meet the needs of families on low incomes or young people seeking to get onto the housing ladder. However, Members were advised that requirements remained for a specific proportion of properties built as part of a larger housing development to be social housing. This would ensure that a supply of affordable housing remained available in the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that

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Policy 5 of the emerging Draft Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 be revised as per Appendix 1 (*to the report*) to incorporate the following headline points:

- a) **all new housing developments within the Borough on sites less than 0.16 hectares should be exempt from the Council's housing density requirements;**
- b) **all new self-build housing developments on sites larger than 0.16 hectares within the Borough should meet a minimum housing density requirement of 15 dwellings per hectare; and that**
- c) **all new bungalow developments within the Borough on sites larger than 0.16 hectares should meet a minimum density requirement of 15 dwellings per hectare.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.30 pm

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LEASE OF THE ANCHORAGE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mark Shurmer - Portfolio Holder for Housing
Portfolio Holder Consulted	√
Relevant Head of Service	Liz Tompkin - Head of Housing Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	The Councillors representing the Central ward have been consulted.
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Through the Council's Joined Up Working, the Principal of the NEW College has approached Redditch Borough Council to assist in providing a property where their apprentices skills can be tested out in real life situations, during their apprenticeship.
- 1.2 The College have also offered to provide the same level of training for our workforce. As part of the transformation work in Housing Repairs we have carried out a skills audit on all of our workforce and have been in negotiations with the union and several organisations as to how we can skill up our workforce and provide our employees with qualifications. The College will provide this training free of charge and are keen to build up an ongoing relationship with the Council in all of the service areas where training can be offered.
- 1.3 Through the Locality work in Winyates we have identified that rent arrears are generally caused by tenants in and out of work and there is a group of people who have never worked. Officers have worked with the Job Centre to try to help people get into work. The College are also keen to offer the same level of training to the community and build up the relationship in working with the Job Centre to help people into work, particularly those who have never worked.
- 1.4 The Housing Revenue Account owns a property, The Anchorage situated in West Avenue which has been empty for 10 plus years. Over the last few years the property has been broken into and the building has been stripped of all the internal fixtures and fittings.
- 1.5 The Anchorage is situated on the same site as Sandycroft/Arden House which are currently occupied by the Sandycroft Wellbeing Centre Community Interest Company.

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2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is requested to RESOLVE that

- 1) “The Anchorage” property be let to the NEW College on a 5 year Full Repairing & Insuring lease which will include the NEW College returning the property in a lettable state;
- 2) a “peppercorn” rent only to be charged to the NEW College due to the benefits to the community and the in-house workforce, who will gain long term from the training the College will be able to provide in the building during the lease period; and
- 3) authority be delegated to the Head of Housing and Head of Legal Services to finalise the detailed provisions of the Lease and implement this decision.

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 A rental valuation of the above property has been prepared based upon the property being in a lettable condition. A rental income of £15,400 pa or £77,000 over a 5 year lease period has been assessed.
- 3.2 Estimated repair costs to put the property into a lettable condition is £35,000.
- 3.3 There are works to be undertaken prior to letting of the property. These are repairs to electrics, gas central heating and demolition of the lean-to at a cost approximately of £15,000. The NEW College have agreed to take on these works once the Council has made safe the electrics and gas to the property.
- 3.4 The College have agreed to leave the property in a refurbished condition, at the end of the leased period arrangement.

Legal Implications

- 3.5 Although the agreement has been that no rent would be charged to NEW College, a “peppercorn” rent will have to be included in the Lease. This can be a sum of “£1, if demanded” and will satisfy the legal requirement for consideration for the Lease.

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- 3.6 Where a Lease is for a term of seven or more years, the Council is required to dispose of any interest in land, including leases for the best financial value available, in order to comply with the requirements of s123 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 3.7 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides the Council with a general power of competence, which enables a local authority to do anything that individuals generally may do and this power is appropriate to the Council in deciding to participate in the envisaged initiative with NEW College to provide training for students and Council employees with a view to improving their levels of expertise and employability.
- 3.8 Clare Flanagan, Principal Solicitor has been consulted on the legal implications.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.9 The Anchorage House site is intended to be used as an On Site Training and Assessment (OSAT) Facility for vocational students from age 16+ studying Construction related NVQ's and other relevant qualifications including, but not limited to, plumbing, gas, carpentry and plastering. The students will primarily be enrolled at NEW College but may also come from other neighbouring colleges. The site will be fully supervised at all times by appropriately qualified Trainers and Assessors, all of whom will be Enhanced DBS checked.
- 3.10 The site will also be used to carry out on-site assessments and gain accreditation at the appropriate level for more experienced employees or Apprentices working within the local community, e.g. within Redditch Council's own R&M workforce. These people may be currently working at Level 2 and 3 within their respective disciplines, but have never been formally assessed to achieve the industry-recognised accreditation and, by doing so this will enable them to advance their careers within their chosen trade to the next level, which may include Site Supervision.
- 3.11 It will offer practical real-work life experience for students and apprentices; preparing them for life outside the traditional classroom and training room environment and will help them to understand how their particular trade fits and works alongside others within the construction industry. The aim is to develop an employment-ready, qualified individual who has experience working in a real life environment. This will enable us to provide a reference to assist them in moving into employment.

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- 3.12 The College target demographic includes students and young people aged 16+, the long-term unemployed, ex-offenders and ex-service personnel looking to re-train, NEETS (young people not in full time education or training), women, traditionally excluded and non traditional groups.
- 3.13 The College's aim is to offer work-ready, qualified trade operatives who have the skills and abilities in demand by local and national employers. The College will actively encourage local companies to view the Training Centre in action, with the aim of encouraging them to offer apprenticeships to their Learners.
- 3.14 It is envisaged that OSATs will be offered Monday to Saturday, typically between the hours of 9am to 5pm.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.15 There are benefits to the community as the property will be used to provide training to a wide demographic group, providing opportunities to improve their skills and gain qualifications and hopefully a pathway into work.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There is a risk of future break-ins and vandalism if the property is left unoccupied.

5. APPENDICES

None.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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