

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Strategy and Resources Committee held at Virtual - Online meeting on Monday, 6th July, 2020 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Worden (Chair)

Councillors Lane, Leaver, Lofthouse, Patrinos, Pearson, Prowse, L. Spear, Wilkinson and Yabsley

Officers:

Chief Executive, Head of Resources, Senior Solicitor/Monitoring Officer, Conservation Officer, Customer and Corporate Services Manager, Head of Environmental Health and Housing, Service Lead Housing Vulnerable Persons and Community Safety and Project and Procurement Officer

Also Present:

Councillors Biederman and Tucker

145. VIRTUAL MEETING PROCEDURE - BRIEFING AND ETIQUETTE

The Chair outlined the virtual meeting procedure and etiquette to the Committee and attendees.

146. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barker.

147. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 JUNE 2020 (ATTACHED).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2020 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

148. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

The Chair advised that an informal meeting of Members would be held following the conclusion of the Committee.

149. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS.

There were no declarations of interest announced.

150. HOMELESSNESS UPDATE AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PODS

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Environmental Health and Housing (circulated previously) regarding an update on Homelessness and the principle of purchasing of individual units of bespoke night by night temporary accommodation for rough sleepers in the form of emergency shelter pods.

The Head of Environmental Health and Housing highlighted the following:

- On 26 March 2020, the Government had sent a letter to the Chief Executive requesting that the Council seek accommodation for all rough sleepers as a matter of urgency.
- The Government had also advised that the Council were unable to operate our winter shelter “Safe Sleep” this year.
- During the peak, the Council received 50 new presentations of homelessness per week.
- The Council were required to modify the delivery of its service in a Covid safe way and needed to also provide a range of different services including the provision of food, water and medicine.
- The procurement of accommodation pods had been identified as a potential solution for the provision of temporary accommodation.
- The Government had recently announced additional £105 million funding available from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government for rough sleeper provision.
- If the Council was successful in drawing down funding from the Government, approval was sought in principle for the purchase of five shelter pods.
- Benefits of procuring shelter pods were outlined in the report and would ensure the wellbeing of extremely vulnerable individuals.

Councillor Worden expressed his appreciation to the Service Lead for Housing Vulnerable Persons and her team and the Head of Environmental Health and Housing for their work.

In response to questions, the Service Lead for Housing Vulnerable Persons and Head of Environmental Health and Housing advised the following:

- The accommodation pods had a small slimline window to allow some light. The pods were purely for sleeping purposes and would only be accessed at night.
- The revenue budget for the delivery of the homelessness service would be used to pay the £500 maintenance costs for each pod. This would also be enhanced by housing benefits.
- Positive discussions had taken place with third parties regarding the location of the pods. Council land may also be used to accommodate one or two pods.
- Once potential locations had been identified a dialogue would be held with relevant stakeholders. The specific locations of the pods would not be reported to the Committee.

- The Service Lead had been successful in drawing down funding from Central Government for rough sleepers and had set up an inter-agency team consisting of representatives from health, adult and social services. This set up was unique and was a really good way of providing a holistic core service.
- Many homeless individuals had been provided with accommodation by the Council and many had now been moved into permanent accommodation, which was a massive achievement for the team.
- The Council received 1 – 2 cases of rough sleeper per week, which showed the pressures that many people were now under.
- The demand for temporary accommodation had doubled during the course of the pandemic. Previously the Council accommodated 20 households. Due to the success in securing permanent accommodation for some households, this number had reduced to below 40.
- There was a need for the Council to provide temporary accommodation during the winter months for individuals who were street homeless. The procurement of 5 pods was considered appropriate in light of the other support that the Council provided. The unit cost for each pod was £6,000.
- It was very difficult to plan for homelessness as the Council could not predict the numbers of households that would present themselves to the Council and whether they would be individuals or families. However, there was a need to model the forecast on an increase in demand and for an increase in the supply of temporary accommodation.
- The Government had also recently announced further funding opportunity of £433 million for the provision of support accommodation and it was important that officers had capacity to submit bids for funding during this busy time.

Councillor Leaver declared a personal interest as a Trustee of Encompass.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That approval be given in principle for the purchase of the shelter pods subject to external funding being received and support regarding identifying suitable locations for them to be sited and that this will become just one of the Council's solutions to bring rough sleepers off the streets and help them to engage with all required services;
- (b) That the general update on homelessness in light of Covid-19 provided by the Head of Environmental Health and Housing be noted.

151. APPROVAL AND RELEASE OF SECTION 106 CONSERVATION AREA FUND FOR FREMINGTON QUAY WALL REPAIR PROJECT PHASE 1

The Committee considered a report by the Conservation Officer (circulated previously) regarding the allocation of Section 106 Conservation funds arising from the development of Fremington Army Camp towards the Fremington Quay Wall Repair Project Phase 1.

The Conservation Officer highlighted the following:

- When the redevelopment of Fremington Army Camp was approved in 2014, the approval was subject to a section 106 agreement contribution of £30,000 for “Conservation Area Contribution”.
- The Council received the contribution in December 2015. The contribution needed to be spent within five years of the date of receipt.
- The original intention was that the fund would be spent within the Fremington Village Conservation Area which included the Army Camp.
- The most suitable target for the money was the grade II listed walled garden and gazebo, however following discussions with the owners it had not been possible to instigate the repair work within the required timescale.
- An alternative use for the funding had been identified at Fremington Quay, which was just to the east of the Army Camp development. It was a separate Conservation Area, however the developer who made the contribution and the Parish Council have confirmed that they no objection to the slight variation.
- The Quay wall bordered the informal car parking area to the north of the café, and there was a slipway at the northern end. South of the slipway, sections of the stone facing to the Quay structure built wall have belied out and collapsed on to the beach. This had resulted in water getting in to the main wall. Repair works were urgently necessary to prevent further deterioration to the structure and keep it safe.
- This would be the first phase of the work. Further funding would be required for the next phase.

RESOLVED that £30,000 be allocated to the Fremington Quay Wall Repair Project Phase 1 to be administered by the Property and Technical Services unit.

RECOMMENDED that Council vary the capital programme by £30,000 and that funds be released for the project.

152. APPROVAL AND RELEASE OF SECTION 106 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE FUNDS - KINGS NYMPTON

The Committee considered a report by the Project, Procurement and Open Space Officer (circulated previously) regarding the allocation of section 106 public open space funds towards one project in Kings Nympton.

The Project, Procurement and Open Space Officer highlighted the following:

- The Council had recently provided section 106 public open space funds to Kings Nympton Parish Council to undertake improvement works at the playing field in Kings Nympton. These works included improvements to access to the playing field by installing a hardstanding concrete footpath.
- Kings Nympton Parish Council have in collaboration with the Friends of Kings Nympton school, the pre-school and Mother and Toddler Group to gather research on a range of play equipment that would benefit the community. As part of this community consultation a zip wire had been identified as the preferred option.

- The Parish Council had obtained quotes. The financial details were detailed in paragraph 5.1 of the report. The remaining amount would be funded by the Playing Field Committee and any overspend would be met by the Parish Council.

RESOLVED that £8,304.27 be allocated to Kings Nympton Parish Council towards the provision of play equipment at Kings Nympton Playing field.

RECOMMENDED that Council vary the capital programme by £8,304.27 and that funds be released subject to a Funding Agreement upon such terms and conditions as may be agreed by the Senior Solicitor for external projects.

153. URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Committee noted the urgent decisions that had been made by the Chief Executive in accordance with paragraph 3.48, Annexe 2, Part 3 of the Constitution (circulated previously) regarding two decisions in relation to the Barnstaple pedestrian and cycle route improvements and a decision relating to urgent works to Lynmouth Esplanade sea wall.

It was noted that Councillor Lofthouse as Ward Member had received notification on 20 May 2020 giving the options and not 19 May 2020.

Chair

The meeting ended at 10.50 am

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.

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