

COUNCIL MEETING – 17 JULY 2018

REPORT OF THE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

2 May 2018

Present: Councillor Griffiths (Chairman), and Councillors Partridge-Underwood, (Vice-Chairman), Emerson, Francis, Graves, Henley, G Lawman, L Lawman, Scarborough, Simmons and Ward.

Also present: Mrs L Elliott (Managing Director), Miss J Thomas (Director/Monitoring Officer), Mrs V Jessop (Assistant Director), Mrs P McCourt (Senior Housing Officer) and Miss N Harewood (Governance Officer).

Councillor Skittrall attended as an observer.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Allebone, Carr, Hallam and Morrall.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the council's code of conduct and the council's constitution, there were no declarations made.

3. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items in accordance with section 100A(4) to the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information of the description shown in schedule 12A to the Act.

Minute No.	Item	Exemption
4	Housing Options Service	E3

4. HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE

The annexed circulated exempt report of the managing director was received in relation to the current issues faced by the housing options service and on the future delivery of homelessness and allocations services.

The report highlighted the issues raised by the council in delivering the statutory homeless duties and set out the options for delivery.

Appended to the report were the following:

- Appendix 1: Option appraisal and cost analysis
- Appendix 2: Structure chart and staff proposal for TUPE
- Appendix 3: Timetable for the tender process with East Northamptonshire Council.
- Appendix 4: Outline for a service specification
- Appendix 5: Options for temporary accommodation – use of capital homeless mitigation fund.
- Appendix 6: Recommendations from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Members thanked officers for providing more clarity in this report which highlighted the issues faced by the council in delivering its statutory homeless duties. The report set out the necessary information to enable a decision to be made on whether the council should continue to provide the service by funding additional posts, or alternatively to enter into a contract with a qualified housing provider.

Members discussed the delivery options available to improve the service and benefit the customer. The options presented were:

- Option 1: Retain in house;
- Option 2: Share with another council;
- Option 3: Tender for a service through a joint or sole procurement.

Members acknowledged that the service was experiencing an increased level of homeless applications resulting in additional pressures both on its staff and finances. Members were also sympathetic to the emotional impact on the staff in dealing with cases concerning safeguarding.

Some members remained concerned that the report did not explain how the options would be achievable in practice, particularly in the absence of additional finance and staff resourcing. Clarification was sought on this issue and on the demand for accommodation outweighing supply. The assistant director explained that the new housing act provisions focus on prevention. A performance contract would be put in place with targets around prevention. A housing association would be likely to have more resources to do this.

Members sought clarification over whether this meant that a housing association would be better equipped than the current housing team. The assistant director clarified that a number of the team were absent through sickness, and this meant that the team was struggling with the volume of cases and staff resources were being diverted from enabling more new affordable homes.

Members discussed in further detail; some had reservations on the proposal to go out to tender for a service through a joint or sole procurement as in option 3, and having a preference to retain the service in house in line with option 1.

They considered that option 2, sharing the responsibility with another council was less viable due to the current uncertainties relating to local government.

It was proposed that approval be given for officers to investigate further the soft market test for the outsourcing of the housing options and homelessness service.

Under rule 4.2.13 (d) of the constitution more than three councillors made a request for a recorded vote on this item.

The following votes were cast:

For: Councillors Graves, Griffiths, G Lawman, L Lawman, Partridge-Underwood, Simmons, Ward (no.7);

Against: Councillors Emerson, Francis, Henley and Scarborough (no.4);

Abstention: None

Absent: Councillors Allebone, Carr, Hallam and Morrall.

The motion was declared carried with 7 votes in favour, 4 against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED that approval be given:

- (i) for a soft market test, for the outsourcing of the housing options and homelessness service, to be undertaken;
- (ii) to a further report being presented to resources committee on 13 June 2018, on the results of the market engagement, with indicative costs for agreement on the future service delivery model.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8pm.

