

RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 12 October 2021

Present:

Councillor Yvonne Bear (Chairman)
Councillor Gary Stevens (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Vanessa Allen, Julian Benington,
Aisha Cuthbert, Christine Harris and Will Rowlands

Also Present:

Councillor Hannah Gray

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Charles Joel and Richard Scoates.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Aisha Cuthbert declared an interest in that she was an employee of a company that was in merger talks with the Riverside Group.

27 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions were received.

28 ACCOMMODATION BASED SUPPORT SERVICES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

HPR2021/051

The Assistant Director of Housing attended to brief the Committee concerning the proposals for accommodation based support services for homeless people. She explained that the accommodation based support was located at Charles Darwin House and Lewis King House. The buildings were owned by Riverside and the support contract was held by Evolve, and it was this support contract that was now ending. The purpose of the report was to request an exemption from competitive tendering in order to enter into direct negotiation with the Riverside Group who owned the buildings and who had made a direct proposal to provide accommodation based support at this location.

12 October 2021

It was noted that Riverside had been undertaking a review of its stock and was committed to investing £26m into their nationwide supported accommodation programme over the next five years.

It was explained that Riverside wanted to use the existing accommodation for themselves. It was their aim to bring the accommodation support services in house. Riverside was seeking a direct agreement with the Council to this end. This would have the benefit to the Council of allowing the existing support services to continue uninterrupted.

The Assistant Director explained that Riverside was a 'not for profit' organisation and was not cross subsidising other functions within the Riverside Group. They were a registered housing provider that the Council was already working closely with. When the existing contract ended, they could take back full use of the buildings for themselves and use them as they saw fit. It was highlighted that if the Council failed to enter into an agreement with Riverside and continue with the existing support services, then it was likely that the property would be utilised by other boroughs. Resultantly, Bromley could see an influx of single people with support needs from outside of the borough.

It would be very difficult for the Council to locate an alternative venue; there was no existing site currently available that was suitable and vacant. A significant benefit of continuing with the existing contract was that there would be no disruption to the existing residents. The Procurement and Legal Teams had confirmed that the Council could enter into a direct agreement with Riverside.

The Assistant Director highlighted that if it was required to decant the existing residents then they would have to be placed in expensive nightly paid accommodation, probably outside of the borough. This would be detrimental to those individuals receiving support as it would disrupt their support networks. It would also be the case that the Council would suffer a loss of temporary and emergency accommodation.

The Assistant Director provided assurances to Members that any significant increases in excess of the current costings would be reported back to Members for approval. Some issues relating to TUPE would need to be costed into the final agreement.

The Vice Chairman said that he supported the recommendations in the report.

A Member asked if Bromley was seeing a large number of single homeless people. The response to this was in the affirmative. The numbers were heightened as a result of 'Everyone In' and the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act, which broadened the number of clients eligible for assistance via the Council.

A Member asked if single people normally remained in the supported accommodation for five years. It was explained that residents followed a set programme of support to enable them to move on; it was hoped in most cases they would move on within two years.

The Chairman asked what would happen if the Council went out to tender and was there likely to be any tenderers for the contract. She also asked for clarity on the benefits provided by the contract and if officers were satisfied that it provided value for money.

The Assistant Director provided details of the financials and these are noted in the Part 2 minutes and in the part 2 report. The Assistant Director explained that there were no suitable units available in the borough and it was unlikely that anyone in the market could provide the service at pace. An additional bonus of the proposed contract with Riverside was the enhanced support that would be provided to residents. Riverside was intending to refurbish the properties. They were also intending to provide additional 'move on' opportunities and provide enhanced support to enable clients to obtain private rented accommodation.

RESOLVED that the Executive should accept the recommendations of the report.

29 TENANCY AND FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

HPR2021/050

The Assistant Director for Housing presented the report concerning tenancy and floating support services for homeless people.

It was noted that the contract was currently held with Hestia for 9 units of accommodation and floating support for up to 100 households. The contract was due to expire in March 2022 when it had been hoped to align this with support services currently managed by the Evolve / Riverside Housing Group contract. This amalgamation was no longer possible and so the report was requesting that the Executive agree a temporary extension of the contract of six months--which would extend it to the 30th of September 2022. This would then enable the service to be reviewed and retendered for separately.

The Chairman supported the plan as proposed.

RESOLVED that the Executive should accept the recommendations of the report.

PART 2 (CLOSED) AGENDA

30 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER

2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

RESOLVED that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business referred to below as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the Press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

**The following summaries
refer to matters involving exempt information**

**31 ACCOMMODATION BASED SUPPORT SERVICES FOR
HOMELESS PEOPLE**

The Committee agreed the recommendations of the report as outlined in the Part 1 minutes.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm