

**BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**

**ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL**

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Environment and Community Panel held on Tuesday, 18th July, 2023 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

**PRESENT:** Councillors S Collop (Chair), T Barclay, M Bartrum, J Bhondi, A Bullen, P Devulapalli, A Dickinson (substitute for H Humphrey), P Kunes, J Ratcliffe, S Sandell and A Ware.

**PORTFOLIO HOLDERS:**

Councillor M de Whalley – Climate Change and Biodiversity.  
Councillor A Kemp – People and Communities.

**PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34:**

Councillor Bullen (remotely)

**OFFICERS:**

Duncan Hall – Assistant Director  
Honor Howell – Assistant to the Chief Executive  
Karl Patterson – Housing Development Officer  
Martin Chisholm – Assistant Director

**EC14: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bland and Humphrey.

**EC15: MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** The Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**EC16: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Bhondi and Ware declared an interest in EC21 as Directors of West Norfolk Property and West Norfolk Housing Company.

Councillor Ratcliffe declared an interest in EC21 as a Director of West Norfolk Housing Company.

**EC17: URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

**EC18: MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor Bullen (remotely).

EC19: **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was none.

EC20: **COUNCILLORS COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME**

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The Assistant to the Chief Executive presented the report and explained that the scheme which had been introduced by the previous Administration provided each Borough Councillor with £1,000 to allocate to projects and initiatives within their Ward.

The Assistant to the Chief Executive provided information on the criteria for projects and the application process. Groups were able to apply online and once the submission had been considered against the criteria it was forwarded onto the relevant Ward Councillor to decide.

Information was provided in the report on the projects which had been supported through the scheme and it was highlighted that many of the schemes contributed towards the priorities in the current Corporate Business Plan.

Not all of the funds had been spent by Councillors last year and underspend had been used to support the Welcome Centre for Refugees and Migrants.

The Chair thanked the Assistant to the Chief Executive for their report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Sandell supported this scheme and commented that even a small amount of funding could have a huge impact on small organisations, it could impact lives and be transformational. She also commented that the application process was straightforward. Cllr Sandell made comments about the difficulty small Parishes, with a large amount of holiday lets or second homes, had in the ability to raise funds through parish precepts and the Assistant to the Chief Executive agreed to look into this when the policy was revised.

Councillor Ware also spoke in support of the continuation of the scheme. She requested that hard copy application forms be made available for those that did not have access to the online form and the Assistant to the Chief Executive agreed to do this.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel supported continuation of the scheme and noted the report.

EC21: **CABINET REPORT - LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND - ROUND 2**

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Officers presented the report and reminded Members that the Council had been successful in round one of this scheme in providing sixteen additional homes. This report considered round two of the scheme which would allow the Council to provide a further seven affordable homes; six for Afghan families and one for temporary accommodation.

Details of the match funding and other funding opportunities available were presented to the Panel and the Panel were informed that work was ongoing with Freebridge Community housing regarding an empty property which may be suitable for use. The remaining properties would be acquired on the open market by the Council, with a view to transferring them to West Norfolk Housing Company at a later date.

The Chair thanked officers for their report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Bullen addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He hoped that properties would be located in areas where there was community support in place.

In response to a question from the Vice Chair, Councillor Devulapalli, officers explained that at the moment West Norfolk Housing Company were not in a position to purchase the properties, but they could be purchased from the Council in the future.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Kemp commented that she supported the scheme which would permanently increase the housing stock which would help alleviate pressures and issues with homelessness.

In response to questions from Councillor Bhondi, it was explained that it was the intention to purchase new or nearly new properties so that they were up to energy efficiency standards etc. Any repairs or maintenance costs would need to be accounted for in the total cost.

**RESOLVED:** That the Environment and Community Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out below.

1. The Council will enter a Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix 1) with DLUHC based on the attached prospectus for the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 2 (appendix 2)

2. The Council will accept the total sum of £868,000 offered to the Council by DLUHC under the Local Authority Housing Fund to deliver the programme understanding the match funding requirements as set out in the report and attached prospectus.
3. The Council will commit match funding of up to £952,000 to deliver the 7 homes.
4. The Council will seek to maximise the Flexible Housing Fund to reduce the overall match funding required from the Council.
5. Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing People and Communities to negotiate and agree the final terms of contract with DLUHC under which the grant will be accepted.
6. The Council will purchase up to 7 properties on the basis of a subsequent freehold transfer to West Norfolk Housing Company subject to agreement from West Norfolk Housing Company.
7. Authority is delegated to the Assistant Director (Regeneration, Housing and Place) and portfolio holder for Communities to provide grant funding from the Local Authority Housing Fund to Freebridge Community Housing in the event that they agree to bring an identified long term empty property back into use as detailed in the report.
8. The Council agrees to the principle of allocating 6 of the properties acquired through the fund to eligible Afghan households in accordance with the existing Local Lettings Plan. 1 property will be used as temporary accommodation.

EC22: **PANEL MEETING ARRANGEMENTS**

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Following on from the Council meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the Panel considered start times for Environment and Community Panel meetings going forward.

**RESOLVED:** That meetings of the Environment and Community Panel start at 4.30pm.

EC23: **PORTFOLIO HOLDER QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting.

EC24: **WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD DECISION LIST**

The Vice Chair, Councillor Devulapalli requested that the Panel consider retrofitting for Council owned properties and poorly insulated homes. The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity, Councillor de Whalley commented that he had been discussing this issue with officers with a view to bringing an item to the Panel in the future for consideration.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel's Work Programme and Forward Decisions List was noted.

EC25: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall.

**The meeting closed at 5.56 pm**