

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES of Meeting of the EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE held in Council Chamber,
Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells,
TD6 0SA on Tuesday, 17th October, 2017 at
10.00 am

Present:- Councillors S. Haslam (Chairman), S. Aitchison, G. Edgar, W. McAteer, S. Mountford, M. Rowley, G. Turnbull, T. Weatherston.
Also present:- Councillors S Bell, K Chapman, S Marshall, H Scott.
Absent:- Councillor T Miers.
Apologies:- Councillors E Jardine and C Hamilton
In Attendance:- Executive Directors (R Dickson and P Barr), Service Director Regulatory Services, Service Director Assets & Infrastructure, Group Manager (Housing & Strategy), Housing Strategy Manager, Financial Services Manager, Passenger Transport Manager, Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (J Turnbull).

1. **MINUTE**

The Minute of meeting of the Executive Committee of 19 September 2017 had been circulated.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

2. **TAXI FARES REVIEW 2017/18**

- 2.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services advising Members of the recent consultations undertaken in connection with the statutory review of the current scale of charges for taxi fares. The Council as licensing authority was required, in terms of Section 17 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 ("the Act"), to review the scales for fares and other charges in connection with the hire of a taxi, at intervals not exceeding 18 months of the last review. For 2017/18 the formula which the Council had used to review taxi rates delivered a variation percentage of -0.45% on the usual indicators over the previous 12 months, with paragraph 3.3 of the report explaining the Council's current formula. Whilst officers recommended that taxi fares remained unaltered in 2018, Members noted that during the statutory consultation with representatives of the trade within the area, a submission proposing an increase of 5% had been made and paragraph 4.6 of the report detailed this proposal. In an effort to provide Members with further consideration, a comparison with the Retail Prices Index (RPI) a national indicator often used for annual or monthly comparisons had been included in paragraph 4.7 of the report.
- 2.2 The Service Director Regulatory Services gave further information about the consultation process and current formula and answered Members' questions; with regard to the formula he confirmed that this was unique to the Scottish Borders. Members noted that there would be a further review of taxi fare settings within 18 months and requested that this review included the taxi fare rates of similar local authorities for comparison purposes.

DECISION

AGREED:

- (a) **That taxi fare rates should remain unaltered in line with the outcome of the Council's established formula;**

- (b) **A further review of the taxi fare setting would be undertaken and implemented within 18 months of this review; and**
- (c) **To request that the next review of taxi fare settings included a comparison of taxi fare rates of other local authorities.**

3. **STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2018-2023 SUBMISSION**

- 3.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services seeking Council approval of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2018-2023 due to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 30 October 2017. Local Authorities were required to produce an annual SHIP submission to the Scottish Government. Scottish Borders Council - with the involvement of its key partners via the SHIP Working Group - had prepared this SHIP submission. The SHIP articulated how the Council and its RSL partners would seek to deliver the Border's affordable housing investment needs and priorities identified in the Council's Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-2022 over a rolling five year planning horizon. Homes delivered would be counted towards the Scottish Parliament's national target of 50,000 Affordable Homes.
- 3.2 Based on a Resource Planning Assumption (RPA) from Scottish Government Officials of £43.957m for the period 2018-2021, £4.6m from charitable bonds, RSL partner private sector borrowing and a commitment from the Council's Affordable Housing Budget, approximately 674 new homes could be delivered over the three year period. However, in response to the Scottish Government's request to over-programme in order to manage any potential project slippage, this SHIP set out an ambitious plan that could potentially deliver up to as many as 1,177 affordable homes over the five-year period of the SHIP. This latter figure assumed that all identified challenges and infrastructure issues were resolved in a timely manner, funding was available, and that agreement was reached between all interested parties and the construction sector had capacity to deliver projects. The SHIP also included a number of new build extra care housing developments in key Borders towns.
- 3.3 Members discussed the report and received answers to their questions from the Group Manager (Housing Strategy and Services). It was explained that part of the remit of the work currently being undertaken to produce an Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Care and Support Needs was to reflect the housing needs and aspirations of older people at a local level. With regard to areas of high demand for housing within the Scottish Borders, it was advised that there was high demand in the central borders, particular Galashiels, Peebles and areas of Berwickshire. Members then discussed deliverability of the project and were advised that availability of land was less of an issue than the challenges around infrastructure investment and resources, many construction workers being attracted to higher wages offered by large national companies in urban areas. SBHA and Eildon Housing were 'packaging' developments into one larger project to make these more attractive to building companies. The Project Priority Weighting matrix, detailed in the report, had been developed as a mechanism to assess priority; deliverability had the highest weighting and was underpinned by Registered Social Landlords' (RSLs) financial capacity to deliver projects. Reference was made to demographic change and the role of private house builders. It was explained that the SHIP was framed in guidance to set out the investment for affordable housing, although officers anticipated being able to provide the evidence to encourage the private sector to develop a mix of social and private housing to address the needs of older people.
- 3.4 The Housing Strategy Manager was also in attendance and in response to a question regarding revitalising redundant commercial and industrial sites, advised that officers continually worked with RSLs to identify opportunities. He referred to the acquisition of the former Castle Warehouse site by Eildon Housing Association to construct extra care housing. There had also recently been a development of flats in Innerleithen on a former garage site. Consideration would be given to other sites in the future, although cognisance had to be made to supply and demand and the displacement of existing

tenants. However, many land owners were reluctant to sell their land having expectations of a greater value for their land or that there could be an increase in land valuations in the future. Members congratulated officers on the ambitious target to maximise delivery of affordable homes in the Scottish Borders and unanimously commended the SHIP.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2018-2023 attached as Appendix 1, to the report, for submission to the Scottish Government More Homes Division by 30 October 2017.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Mountford, as Chair of Scottish Borders Housing Association, declared an interest in the above report but remained during the discussion.

4. PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF ALLOCATED HOUSING SITE AT STIRCHES, HAWICK TO EILDON HOUSING ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXTRA CARE HOUSING

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services seeking Council agreement in principle to dispose of the Council-owned allocated Housing Site at Stirches, Hawick to Eildon Housing Association in order that it might be re-developed to provide extra care housing. The report also proposed that the Council disposed of the site on the basis of a nominal £1.00 as being best value in accordance with current Scottish Government Guidance regarding disposal of former Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets. The site had been identified as a potential site in the Extra Care Housing Delivery Framework, approved by Members on 20 September 2016, and was consistent with the approach taken previously by the Council in disposal of 11 former Housing Revenue Account sites since 2003 for the development of affordable housing. It had also been prioritised as an affordable housing site for anticipated development by Eildon Housing Association in the Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2017-22 and SHIP 2018-23. Members discussed the report and welcomed the provision of extra care housing in Hawick.

DECISION

AGREED:

- (a) In principle to the proposed disposal of the allocated housing site at Stirches Hawick to Eildon Housing Association in order that it may be developed to provide extra care housing, and additional affordable housing if space permitted; and**
- (b) To delegate authority to the Council's Service Director, Assets and Infrastructure to lead on representing the Council's interest in concluding the disposal of the allocated Housing Site at Stirches, Hawick to Eildon Housing Association on the basis of a nominal price of £1.00, and upon terms and conditions to be agreed.**

5. PRIVATE BUSINESS

AGREED under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in the Appendix to this minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of part 1 of schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

6. MINUTE OF SOCIAL WORK COMPLAINTS REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Minute of the meeting held on 23 August 2017 was approved.

The meeting concluded at 10.45 am.