

## **COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**21st July 2021**

**Present:** Councillor James Stanley in the Chair

Councillors B. Amos, Bisset, Carver, Collins, Denham, Griffiths, Hassan, Johnson, Lamb and Riaz (Vice-Chair)

**Officers:** Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director – Homes and Communities  
Warwick Neale, Interim Head of Community Services  
Philippa Tinsley, Museums Manager

### **11 Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor Griffiths for Councillor Hodgson.

### **12 Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **13 Public Participation**

None.

### **14 Minutes**

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

### **15 Museums Worcestershire Annual Review**

The Committee received a presentation from the Museums Manager on the activities undertaken in museums in 2020-21 and the impact made. The report highlighted in particular the agile and flexible response to the pandemic which enabled the service to connect with families and those alone at home via online and outreach resources, exhibitions, and events. The Museums Manager responded to questions from Committee Members.

Members welcomed the report and expressed thanks to the work undertaken by both staff and volunteers under such difficult circumstances.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee note the activities undertaken in museums in 2020-21 and the impact made.**

### **16 Worcestershire Housing First Contract Update**

The Committee received an update on progress of the Worcestershire Housing First contract that was introduced in February 2020, with a particular focus on Worcester City and its 12 units of Housing First (HF) accommodation. Jonathan Sutton, Chief Executive, St. Paul's Hostel, gave a presentation to the Committee and responded to questions.

In summary, the service provided support for up to 34 rough sleepers and targeted those most difficult to accommodate. All of Worcester's 12 HF units were occupied. The service had to date had a 100% success in supporting participants to maintain their tenancy and there had been no returns to rough sleeping in Worcester. The University of Worcester had been commissioned to carry out an independent evaluation of the service which was due to run for the duration of the contract.

In the ensuing discussion, Committee Members welcomed the success of the service locally.

A question was asked about whether participation in HF had led to persons becoming free from substance misuse and Jonathan Sutton stated that he would investigate and provide a written response.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee note the contents of the report.**

**17 Proposal for a Local Authority Capital Contribution to support the delivery of long-term Rough Sleeper Move-On Accommodation**

The Committee considered a report on the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) funding opportunity provided through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), which required submission by 2 September 2021. The Corporate Director – Homes and Communities presented the report and explained that, as part of the bid, Citizen Housing are proposing to acquire up to 8 x 1 bed self-contained flats in Worcester by 31 March 2022. In order to secure the best chance of being successful, Citizen Housing were requesting grant from Homes England to the value of £45,000 per unit (£360,000 in total) with Worcester City Council (subject to approval) providing a further contribution of £15,000 per unit (£120,000 total) to Citizen, in order to make up the £60,000 per unit subsidy. Citizen Housing would then make up the difference between grant and purchase price to acquire the property and then the repair. The Council would have 100% nomination rights.

It was proposed to allocate the contribution from the Housing for Vulnerable Tenants City Plan Fund which was agreed by Policy and Resources Committee on 18 March 2018. The proposal was to provide a grant contribution of up to £120,000 from the above fund to Citizen Housing and to utilise a further £20,000 of this fund to support set up costs of each of the units of accommodation.

In response to questions, the Corporate Director explained in detail RSAP's objective to provide move-on homes and how this initiative will be applied locally to help in delivering accommodation for rough sleepers. He acknowledged that RSAP revenue funding is currently only available until 31 March 2024 and a report will be brought to a future meeting well in advance of this date setting out options for sustaining this revenue requirement.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:**

- 1. note the contents of this report and in particular the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) Funding opportunity provided through MHCLG which requires submission by 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021;**

2. **recommend to Policy and Resources Committee for approval, an allocation of up to £120,000, to be met from the Vulnerable Adults Accommodation City Plan Fund, to support the submission of the said bid which if successful would result in the acquisition of 8 self-contained properties by Citizen Housing, and which will be for the sole use of Worcester City Council for a period of 30 years; and**
3. **subject to approval by Policy and Resources Committee in respect of recommendation 1.2, approves an allocation of a further £20,000 from the Vulnerable Adults Accommodation City Plan Fund in order to furnish the properties.**

## **18 Quarter 1 Performance Report For 2021/22**

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 1 performance for Communities for 2021/22. The Scorecard had been refreshed with projects completed in the last financial year replaced by new projects as previously agreed by this Committee. The Corporate Director – Homes and Communities presented the report and highlighted the main points.

Committee Members asked questions on various aspects of the report. In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- Reference was made to the need to evidence and meet certain criteria to qualify for free access to tennis in the parks. The potential for free tennis for children over the school summer holidays was also raised and the potential for incorporating tennis into the programme of events offered by Worcester Community Trust. The Corporate Director stated that the access requirements are in keeping with other leisure concessions but he will look into the points raised and discuss with the Chair and Vice-Chair to establish whether more can be done to address the points raised.
- A question was asked about whether the target for delivery of affordable housing is sufficiently challenging? The Corporate Director replied that it reflects the challenge in identifying availability of land in the city. This issue will be addressed as part of a Worcestershire-wide Housing Strategy, to be brought to this Committee in November. A comment was also made about enabling allocations in the urban extension developments on the periphery of the city, and the Corporate Director stated that he will ask Officers to look into this point.
- An update report on the findings of the Child Poverty Task and Finish Group will be subject to a report back to this Committee in November.
- In response to a request for more information on the delivery of affordable housing units, the Corporate Director stated that the next performance report can include narrative to evidence the different types of housing and the number for each.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to note the Council's Quarter 1 performance for 2021/22.**

**19 Any Other Business**

None.

**Duration of the meeting:** 7.00p.m. – 8.50p.m.

Chair at the meeting on  
3rd November 2021